THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

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THE MEANING AND RELATIONS OF SCULPTURE, PAINTING, POETRY, AND MUSIC

BY

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS

S. 170 Esthetics

ORCHARD HILL PRESS
CROTON-ON-HUDSON
NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

INTRODUCTION

THE aim of this study is to show what art is, how it comes out of the life of man, and what specific function each of the great ideal arts fulfills in relation to the human spirit. There is great need of such study to-day. We in America have been turning with remarkable interest and enthusiasm to all fields of art and intellect. It would seem that the splendid energy which has built up our wonderful material civilization is now to find expression in the life of the spirit, with the promise of equally great achievement there. There is scarcely an important city in the land that has not at least the beginnings of a museum of sculpture and painting. Opportunities for hearing great music have been multiplied several times within a few decades. Gifts to education and to all aspects of culture have increased enormously; while even more significant of our spirit is the extent to which we send

our students abroad. In any European school of fine art at least half the students not native to the country in question are American. In other words, we send to foreign schools more students than all the other nations taken together. Of course, we ought to do so, for we are a youthful people and need to learn from the accumulated culture of the older world; but the significance of our action is no less great. All these signs, with the increasing patronage of the arts by wealth and power, mean much for our happiness, our culture as a people and our contribution to the world.

Unfortunately this great movement is sadly hampered by ignorance and, worse, by flagrant misconceptions as to the meaning and function of the arts. Turn to the literature of the subject: there is admirable material on the technical aspects of the arts, and excellent history and criticism; but where is any adequate study of the specific power and limitations of each of the arts in expressing and interpreting the human spirit? Lessing's *Laokoön* is still the best book we have on the subject; while it is far behind the experience and what ought to be the thinking of our time, and attempted at

most only to define the mutual limits of the plastic arts and poetry. Really the great books in the field we are attempting include hardly more besides Lessing's than Leonardo's *Note Books,* Wagner's writings and Schiller's *Æsthetic Essays.*

Worse than the ignorance and lack of thought are the prevailing misconceptions. The most widely accepted of these is in the mind of the general public. It is the notion that art is a dispensable luxury, a polite adornment of life, pleasant enough where there is ample wealth and leisure, but of no value until the serious business of life is fulfilled. Utterly wrong as this notion is, it is nevertheless taken for granted by the multitude, not only in the unthinking mass, but in circles of wealth, social prominence and even of supposed culture. Indeed, the fault is old and long enduring, for the cry of the artist in all epochs has been that his work is not taken as the serious aim of life it is, but as an adventitious adornment of the more or less superficial amenities of social existence. Carlyle voices this in Teufelsdröckh who resents being made polite fringe on Lady Somebody's "Æsthetic Tea;" while

Goethe's study of the behavior of the emperor and court toward Helena in the Second Part of *Faust* is the most scathing portrayal I know in literature of the whimsical reaction of the world of polite society on the miraculous creation of beauty which should inspire silent awe.

How prevalent the same attitude is to-day! Consider the behavior of persons wandering through a gallery of painting, saying, "I like this" or "dislike that," as if they had the right to like or dislike until they have appreciated and understood what of human thought and feeling is given, and with what measure of adequacy and harmony. Go to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, when some masterpiece of Wagner is given. Where do you find the true music lovers? Oh, everywhere, of course—one wants to be fair—but many of them are standing up in the top gallery; while, of the high-priced boxes in the great oval, many are empty the first hour and empty the last half hour—society displaying itself and its clothes as at any other function, with no notion of the attitude necessary to the creation and appreciation of true art.

There is, of course, another side to this which

all great artists have understood: art can have no higher function than in transfiguring the life of *this moment*. What is posterity if not men and women such as we, and why should the artist work for some future time and not for the living world about him? Leonardo da Vinci, painter of perhaps the greatest picture the world has seen—the ruined masterpiece on Milan monastery wall—was willing to use his unparalleled genius to prepare some masque or other artistic pleasure for the court circle at Milan, given once and never repeated; and Goethe himself was glad to employ the genius that created *Faust* in some like service for the group at Weimar. When, however, art is made a mere pleasant fringe and polite decoration to the more or less superficial and often frivolous activities of social life, the wrong thing is taken for the center and art is prostituted.

A second error, only less harmful than the first, prevails also in the mind of the public, though not so widely. It is very good persons who make this mistake, often with fanatical earnestness. Their error is in holding that art is justified by some obvious didactic moral

teaching. They accept the drama or novel if it preaches some sermon, the painting if it carries a moral lesson. Goethe has sufficiently characterized this point of view. He says: "A good work of art can, and will indeed, have moral consequences; but to require moral ends of the artist, is to destroy his profession."* "To destroy his profession": the phrase is not too strong. In so far as the artist becomes preacher he is apt to cease to be artist, since his didactic moral is so much more limited than the aim of art, which is the presentation of the whole truth of life in a form of beauty. The artist must strive for the abiding truth rather than its changing application. If he deals with the issue of the hour, it must be in no narrow partisan spirit, but with the vision of the eternal through the transient. Compare Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to see the difference between the literature of propagandism, even of superior excellence, and art. A certain *withdrawal* from life and its feverish conflicts is always

* Denn ein gutes Kunstwerk kann und wird zwar moralische Folgen haben, aber moralische Zwecke vom Künstler fordern, heiszt ihm sein Handwerk verderben."—*Dichtung und Wahrheit,* book XII, Bohn Library translation, p. 469.

necessary for the artist that he may have perspective. To create art one must have lived, but to create art one must also have withdrawn from life to the mountain height of spiritual isolation. Thus always the loneliness and pain of the great artist: sometimes it finds tender and sad expression as in Shelley and Chopin; sometimes it causes the despairing reaction of a Leopardi or a Schopenhauer; sometimes it produces the grave irony of a Goethe or a Wagner; but always it is present, and the vision of the artist is bought with the pain of being consciously apart.

Thus the true moral value of a work of art is in the nature of the work itself, not in an Æsop *Fables'* moral appended at the end. Suppose Shakespeare had affixed to *Othello* a statement that he had meant to teach us the ugliness of jealousy: what a pitiful anti-climax it would have been! If the moral meaning is not involved in the very nature of a work of art, then it is bad art. No, art is not for preaching's sake, any more than it is for adornment's sake; and many of the "good" people are as far wrong as the frivolous.

These two errors in the public mind have

helped breed a third, prevailing among artists themselves—the notion that art exists for the sake of exhibiting technical skill in the mastery of difficulties. The great men have never made this mistake: they invariably have recognized that technical skill is never an end at all, but always a means—a glorious one—to something beyond itself; but among lesser artists the superstition is widely prevalent.

It is easy to see how it arises. Probably there never was an earnest student beginning to learn a particular art who did not look forward to creating his masterpiece. The young poet dreams of his *Divine Comedy* or *Faust,* the painter, of the ceiling of some new Sistine Chapel, the musician, of compositions that shall rival Beethoven, the sculptor, of his new Periclean marbles and his brooding figures on fresh Medicean tombs. With such aspirations invariably the student begins; but what happens? Soon he discovers that the road he must travel is painfully long and beset with hard obstacles. The embryonic painter, for example, finds he must wholly subordinate his own ideas, draw for years from the antique before he is allowed even to begin to copy nature.

Only after long discipline in drawing may he add color, and how long is the road before any self-expression is permitted. Thus he is apt to forget all about the end which originally he had in view, and become absorbed wholly in conquering the difficulties in the path. To acquire and exhibit such skill comes more and more to seem itself the aim.

The just reaction against seeking an adventitious end for art accentuates this tendency. I have always sympathized with the painters' protest against such a view of their art as Ruskin preached. Ruskin's work was strong and permanently helpful; but in all his study of painting he sought some definitely moral or religious end in the effect of the art; yet beauty is its own sufficient justification; art need seek no end outside itself; and thus arises the cry "art for art's sake." On a high plane this is right; but when art for art's sake is interpreted to mean art for technique's sake—for the sake of exhibiting technical skill in mastering difficulties—then art is reduced to the level of a juggler's tricks or refined gymnastic. To walk a tight rope without a balancing pole shows admirable technical skill, but surely it is not

fine art in the same sense as painting or music. Technical skill, excellent and desirable as it is, is always a means and never an end in itself; and the exhibition of it merely evidences power which is vain unless used for some aim worth while.

The third error is thus as far from the truth as either of the others; yet one would scarcely believe how prevalent it is among the rank and file of artists. Listen to a group of painters commenting upon the pictures of a gallery. Of what do they speak: of the way that landscape rests and calms the spirit; of the sweep of humanity in this portrayal of common life? No; but of the skill with which the lighting is handled here; the fault in the composition there; the method of putting on his colors which this painter has employed. It is natural: they are constantly working with these technical problems, and thus they look for the handling of them in the work of others. The result, however, is the focussing of their attention almost wholly on the means employed.

Sit behind a group of musical artists during the rendering of a Beethoven symphony or a Wagner opera. Do they speak of the power

of the music to sweep one out on to the bosom of the sea of emotion, to refresh the spirit and give the vision of the ideal? No, but of the skill with which that high note was struck; the admirable rendering of this difficult passage by the violins; the fault in the conductor's reading of that other passage. Indeed, it is even possible for the mind to become so absorbed in the analysis of technique as actually to lose in power of appreciation. One finds cases where a student has worked ten years in mastering the technique of an art, and at the end of the time has really less power to appreciate spontaneously the art than when he began his study. This need not happen and ought not to happen, but the fact that it does occur shows how far the mastery and exhibition of technical skill is from the true aim of art. No, art is not for technique's sake, any more than it is for adornment's sake, or preaching's sake. These three misconceptions stand in the way of our right use of art to-day, and we must overcome them to make our contribution as a people and to give art the place it should occupy in our culture. Art is serious business; beauty is the most useful thing we know; the

ideal is no less real than the coarsest material end. *Art is for life's sake.*

There are thus three underlying questions in the study here undertaken: first, What is Art? Second, What does Art do to the artist who creates? Third, What does Art do to the student who appreciates? The study deals primarily with the four great ideal types of art—sculpture, painting, music and poetry. Architecture, so largely conditioned by utility, will be considered in comparison, as will the composite arts—song, opera, dramatic portrayal.

The method employed is not a review of philosophy and criticism of art, but a study of selected masterpieces in each field, asking what these do to our senses, emotions, imagination and intellect. This is merely applying to the realm of art the method universally insisted upon in all natural science, namely, first finding the facts and then seeking to discover what these mean. In art, as in science, a little direct, first-hand study is worth more than much reading of theory. In this work, if I may speak personally, what I have to offer is at least my own—not a restatement of criticism and philos-

ophy, but the condensed result of twenty-five years' study of works of art in each of the four fields, recording and interpreting what these masterpieces have done to my senses, emotions, imagination and intellect. The same method must be employed by each student if he would arrive at clear conceptions of the meaning and function of these several fine arts; and the reflections and conclusions tentatively offered in the following chapters should be used as a challenge to the reader's own mind, on the basis of his own first-hand study of masterpieces in the respective fields.

"I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven, and in their disciples and apostles; I believe in the Holy Ghost and the truth of Art—one and indivisible; I believe that this art proceeds from God and dwells in the hearts of all enlightened men; I believe that whoever has revelled in the glorious joys of this high art must be forever devoted to it and can never repudiate it; I believe that all may become blessed through this art, and that therefore it is permitted to any one to die of hunger for its sake; I believe that I shall become most happy through death; I believe that I have been on earth a discordant chord, that shall be made harmonious and clear by death. I believe in a last judgment, that shall fearfully damn all those who have dared on this earth to make profit out of this chaste and holy art—who have disgraced it and dishonored it through badness of heart and the coarse instincts of sensuality; I believe that such men will be condemned to hear their own music through all eternity. I believe, on the other hand, that the true disciples of pure art will be glorified in a divine atmosphere of sun-illumined, fragrant concords, and united eternally with the divine source of all harmony. And may a merciful lot be granted me! Amen!"—Wagner, in "An End in Paris," *Art Life and Theories*, p. 90.

CHAPTER I

THE EXPRESSION OF HUMAN LIFE IN ART

WHEN we consider what has been accomplished in the field of art our first impression is of so overwhelming a wealth and variety that it seems impossible to gather it all in a single statement. How shall we define art so as to include works as remote from each other as the *Ramayana* and the songs of Burns, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and the music of Chopin, the *Poem of Job* and the frescoes of Andrea del Sarto? Can it be possible to find a unifying principle for all these? The problem is bewildering; yet we individually may respond to *all* these types of art; they all are our heritage. Thus, there must be some element common to them all to make possible the universal human appeal.

To find this element, turn for a moment to a brief poem coming from a time as remote as

possible from our own, a *Hymn to the Dawn* from the ancient Vedic literature:

To the Dawn *

"She shines upon us like a young wife, rousing every living being to go to his work. The fire had to be kindled by men; she brought light by striking down darkness.

She rose up, spreading far and wide, and moving toward every one. She grew in brightness, wearing her brilliant garment. The mother of the cows (of the morning clouds), the leader of the days, she shone gold-colored, lovely to behold.

She, the fortunate, who brings the eye of the god, who leads the white and lovely steed (of the sun), the Dawn was seen, revealed by her rays, with brilliant treasures she follows every one.

Thou, who art a blessing where thou art near, drive away the unfriendly; make the pastures wide, give us safety! Remove the haters, bring treasures! Raise up wealth to the worshiper, thou mighty Dawn.

Shine for us with thy best rays, thou bright Dawn, thou who lengthenest our life, thou the love of all, who givest us food, who givest us wealth in cows, horses and chariots.

* F. M. Mueller, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 551 and 552. Williams & Norgate, London, 1860.

Thou, daughter of the sky, thou high-born Dawn, whom the Vasishthas magnify with songs, give us riches high and wide: all ye gods, protect us always with your blessings!"

Our first impression from this old song is one of strangeness. Far as it is from us in time, it is still farther from our way of thought and life. We do not worship the Dawn, it is not a goddess to us. Moreover, with our way of life, we rarely see the Dawn; yet read more closely, and the feeling of remoteness vanishes. After all, the old poet is merely recording, under different expressions, universal experience. Light is always a miracle to a fresh mind. It is not that "God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" God *says,* Let there be light, and there is light, with each morning. The spreading of the rosy fingers of the Dawn over the sky, the "growing in brightness," the "bringing the eye of the god," the sun—is it not an ever fresh miracle? The fire on the hearth "had to be kindled by men"—by hard labor in primitive times, striking one stone upon another or rubbing two sticks together; "she brought light by

striking down darkness." The housewife of the home moves toward this person or that one; this housewife of the sky "moves toward every one," "rousing every living being to go to his work," this "mother of the cows"—the light morning clouds that promise the life-giving milk of the rain. The earthly woman is revealed by light shining upon her; this goddess of the sky is "revealed by her rays," "lovely to behold." Is it not just what any unspoiled nature, with fresh awakened senses, sees in the Dawn?

Then, changing the key, the universal meaning of light to the spirit of man is given. Light has always been the symbol of safety and goodness, darkness of evil and danger. Little children still cry in the dark; and men, children of a larger growth, still tremble before the darkness that shrouds the unknown. So the eternal prayer: "Drive away the unfriendly," "give us safety," "thou who art a blessing where thou art near;" and, as the day gives opportunity for work, "raise up wealth to the worshiper, thou mighty Dawn." Thus, in other language, the poem gives simply and in the metaphor of strong, direct appreciation,

the two permanent aspects of man's relation to the everlasting miracle of light.

Thus it is everywhere: art is always an expression of some phase of man's life or relation to nature; and it is this universal human basis that makes possible our appreciation of works so varied, coming from such different sources in place and time. You turn to the *Antigone* of Sophocles: how strange it is, this story of a sister who brings herself to suffer death in cruel fashion merely that she may give the rites of the dead to the body of her brother. How foolish you say: his soul would not have suffered had the rites been omitted; but hear what she says. The tyrant asks:

"And thou didst dare to disobey these laws?"

Antigone responds:

"Yes, for it was not Zeus who gave them forth,
Nor Justice, dwelling with the gods below,
Who traced these laws for all the sons of men;
Nor did I deem thy edicts strong enough,
That thou, a mortal man, shouldst overpass
The unwritten laws of God, that know not change.
They are not of to-day nor yesterday,
But live forever, nor can man assign

When first they sprang to being. Not through fear
Of any man's resolve was I prepared
Before the gods to bear the penalty
Of sinning against these." *

Then we understand: while we, with our different belief and training, might have chosen a different particular action, she was doing only what all noble souls have ever done—giving up her own lesser good for the greater good of one she loved. So the strangeness disappears, and the common human experience —thank God it *is* common—comes home to us through a form which seems so far away. Thus always art is an expression of some aspect of the common basis of human life.

This is evidenced also by the fact that the different fine arts actually spring from one historical source—an act of worship in the early Greek world, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter. Further, reversing the problem, masterpieces in widely different arts may produce the same dominant impression upon us, thus proving the unity in the basis from which they

* *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, translated by E. H. Plumptre, p. 145. Routledge & Co., New York.

spring. This likeness among masterpieces in different fields is indeed so strong that there are great artists working in totally different spheres who, nevertheless, are brothers across the centuries. The particular avenue of their artistic expression seems relatively incidental; they sound the same deeps and produce the same type of effect. Compare, in poetry, Æschylus, in sculpture and painting, Michael Angelo, in music, Beethoven: these men are truly brothers across the centuries. They are the titanic dreamers, thinkers who sheer down to the very heart of life. Their brooding is so vast that any artistic form is too small to embody it. Thus, much as they give, their supreme power lies in stimulating the imagination to go on beyond what is given to a still vaster world. It is of small consequence that one was poet, another painter and sculptor, and the third musical artist. Æschylus is closer to Michael Angelo than to his contemporary, Sophocles, in the same field of poetry; while Michael Angelo is nearer Beethoven than to his fellow-painter, Raphael, working in the same place and time.

Take as a second group, similarly related,

Sophocles in poetry, Raphael in painting, and Mozart in music. These, too, are brothers across the centuries; for they are the finished artists, not brooding upon vast, unconquerable dreams, not peering awe-struck into the abyss, but clothing a wisely limited content in exquisitely harmonious form. They rest us, more than they stimulate, satisfy with perfect beauty, rather than exalt with irregular reaches of sublime power. Thus their kinship in the spirit: Mozart, modern German, is closer to the Greek poet, Sophocles, than to his fellow-musician, Beethoven, and Raphael is more akin to Mozart than to his Italian contemporary and brother in painting, Michael Angelo.

To clinch the argument consider a third group: Andrea del Sarto in painting, Chopin in music, Heine in poetry. Do you see why these three are classed together as in their own way brothers across the centuries? With marvellous technical skill and astonishing ease of execution, these men are neither titanic thinkers nor, characteristically, the artists who rest us with balanced harmony. They are rather the personal revealers; we long to grope behind their work to some deep of experience explain-

ing its character. They sing in minor key and paint with a subtle mingling of light and shadow. In the elusive paintings of Andrea, in the sobbing harmonies of Chopin pushed almost to the point of discord, in the haunting melodies of Heine, alike is voiced a strange sadness—the hunger and pain of a spirit too delicately sensitive and too keenly responsive to every appeal of beauty and desire to find life easy or comfortable in such a world as ours. Thus these three are closer together than each was to his fellow artists in the same field, of the same place and time.

This unity of spirit and impression among works of art so remote from each other sufficiently proves the unity of human experience in and behind all art. One person is like all; that is why we can understand each other. Life is made of a few simple, common elements. As the physical life is made of fresh air, sunshine, nourishing food and exercise, so the spiritual life is made of love and work, hunger to know truth and appreciate beauty, aspiration toward the ideal. "One is like all." The novels and dramas of the world's literature focus upon two or three problems—half

of them on personal love; and in this unity of common experience is the basis of all appreciation of art, since every work of art is the expression of some aspect of this common life. Even when art attempts the merest imitation of objective nature it is still expression, since it embodies the human love of reality and desire of incarnating it in artistic form.

Since life is made of so few and simple elements, and art is always an expression of this common basis, what makes possible the fresh appeal in a new work of art? The answer is found first in the fact that art expresses the common basis of human life only through the medium of personality. Now each personality is unique and unparalleled. If one is like all, each is also different from all others. Life is, in each individual, a fresh equation of old forces: the basis is universal, the form unique.*

Thus as art expresses the common basis of human life only through the medium of per-

* For a fuller exposition of the two correlative principles—the unity of human life and the uniqueness of each personality—consult chapters II and III in the author's *Moral Education,* B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1904.

sonality, the old elements are stamped with the fresh quality of the transmuting medium. How the wealth of old northern mythology is transformed as it is passed through the spectrum of Wagner's genius. Dante gathers up the world of mediæval experience, but stamps it all with the color of his own character. The common tendencies of the renaissance receive widely different form through such contrasting personalities as Raphael and Michael Angelo.

Art, moreover, expresses the basis of human experience always in definitely limited form, and herein lies the further reason for its ever new appeal. The altar at which every artist must perpetually bow is the shrine of the goddess of limits. The undefined is never the artistic, and the more rigid the limitation, the more perfect may be the art. Vague, brooding emotions and thoughts become art only as they receive this rigid definition in form. While Faust dwells with "The Mothers" he is in the presence of the vast, uncreate energies from which all beauty springs; but it is only when out of them the one perfectly limited form of Helena is called into being that art is born.

Thus it is that each new expression of art,

because it is born through the medium of personality into definitely limited form, may have its fresh appeal. A poet of the day, not of the highest power, has dared to take a subject-matter as old as Europe, which received artistic expression for all time through the genius of the father of western poetry, Homer, in the song of world-wandering Ulysses; yet when we take Stephen Phillips's *Ulysses,* and listen to his hero as, standing on the shore of Calypso's island, he voices his hunger to see "Gaunt Ithaca stand up out of the surge," or hear him murmur "little Telemachus," the tears come to our eyes and we are moved anew with the eternal hunger for wife and child and home.

Fortunately for our illustration there are available two little poems brief enough to quote, both written by gifted lyric poets and dealing with the same theme. On the 16th of April, 1746, Charles Edward Stuart, with the Scotch highlanders, fought at Culloden, or Drumossie Moor, near Inverness, his last unavailing battle for the English crown. He and his highlanders were utterly cut to pieces by the Duke of Cumberland with the English

troops. Early in the year 1746, Collins—a poet of great lyrical power—wrote the following *Ode* in memory of the English who fell in the war against the Pretender:

"How sleep the Brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell a weeping hermit there!"

Robert Burns also wrote a *Lament for Culloden,* for the Scotch highlanders who fell in defeat. It is also a little lyric of two stanzas:

"The lovely lass o' Inverness,
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;
For e'en and morn she cries, Alas!
And aye the saut tear blin's her ee:
Drumossie moor—Drumossie day—
A waefu' day it was to me!

For there I lost my father dear,
My father dear, and brethren three.

Their winding-sheet the bluidy clay,
Their graves are growing green to see:
And by them lies the dearest lad
That ever blest a woman's ee!
Now wae to thee, thou cruel lord,
A bluidy man I trow thou be;
For mony a heart thou hast made sair
That ne'er did wrong to thine or thee."

Both these are exquisite lyrics: which makes the stronger appeal? Well, a small fraction of readers—those who are peculiarly responsive to stately, allegorical imagery, who rank Spenser beside Shakespeare and have the ear rather than the eye memory—would prefer the *Ode* of Collins; but all the rest of us respond more deeply to the appeal of Burns. The reason is not difficult to state: one man is more than a multitude of men. The grief of one Scotch lassie appeals more powerfully than the statement that so many thousand men fell in a certain battle. It is only through the individual that we appreciate humanity. You read in the newspaper that a factory has been

shut down and six hundred men are out of work; and then you pass on to the next item about Mrs. Somebody's dinner party, and the one statement makes almost as much impression as the other; but if it has ever been your lot to live next door to a family in which the husband and father was out of work, you understand. If you have seen the man's face, day after day, as he kissed his wife good-bye and went on the unavailing search for work; if you have seen the tears in her eyes as she turned into the house; if you have watched the children grow paler and more hungry-looking day by day, you know what it means that six hundred men are out of work. One man is more than a multitude of men; the individual is the key to the whole; and it is because art always expresses the common basis of human experience only through the medium of personality and in definitely limited form that its appeal may be eternally fresh and new.

All art is thus expression; but, I need scarcely add, not all expression is art. To be art, the expression must be *adequate* and *harmonious*. This does not mean that art should produce only what is pleasing to the senses:

the notion that art must always do this is one of the further unwarranted superstitions prevalent in our time. The principle is that the body of expression should be appropriately married to the soul of meaning. Gloom, for example, is not sensuously pleasing, but the gloom that broods upon the recumbent figures from the hand of Michael Angelo, on the Medicean tombs, is beautiful, because it perfectly expresses the mood Michael Angelo wished to embody.

Tennyson is one of the most consistently, almost monotonously melodious poets in the English language; yet there are harshly discordant lines in Tennyson, and they are artistic because they are harsh. When Tennyson represents himself as returning in *In Memoriam* to the street before the house from which his friend had gone out never to return, he paints the scene as in the early morning, with the day breaking in dismal rain. The whole brief canto of three stanzas is masterly, and the closing two lines are:

> "And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day."*

* *In Memoriam,* canto VII.

Note the harsh sound and painful association of the words. Moreover, the last line is all monosyllabic, and Pope showed long ago what happens when

"—ten low words oft creep in one dull line."*

It is impossible to make poetry out of monosyllables, for the regular metrical stress will too rarely correspond to the natural emphasis to make music. Further, in Tennyson's line the metrical stress falls just where it ought not in ordinarily good poetry—on the unimportant words. Thus, scanned conventionally, the line reads:

"On the bald street breaks the blank day."

Read the two lines, however, just as they are, or let them read themselves through you:

"And ghastly through the drizzling rain,
On the bald street breaks the blank day;"

and you are left with the same clutch at your throat and the same sob in your heart that Ten-

* *Essay on Criticism.*

nyson felt. That is art: adequately and harmoniously marrying the body of expression to the soul of thought, feeling and imagination.

How far art should go in portraying the physically horrible and the morally depraved is an open question. My own feeling is that there are deeps so terrible that art would better draw the curtain and leave them unsounded; but one thing is certain: whatever art does venture to portray must be given in form appropriate to the content expressed. If that is painful and discordant, so must be the body of true artistic expression. Thus as Dante comes to the lowest pit of hell we find him saying:

"If I had rhymes both rough and stridulous,
As were appropriate to the dismal hole
Down upon which thrust all the other rocks,
I would press out the juice of my conception
More fully; but because I have them not,
Not without fear I bring myself to speak;
For 'tis no enterprise to take in jest,
To sketch the bottom of all the universe,
Nor for a tongue that cries Mamma and Babbo." *

* Dante, *Inferno*, canto XXXII, Longfellow's translation.

That is, he would deliberately use harsher music, if he could find it, to express harmoniously the moral horror of the nether hell.

Let us sum up our work to this point: art is the adequate and harmonious expression of some aspect of man's life or relation to nature, through the medium of personality, in definitely limited form.

"When imagination incessantly escapes from reality, and does not abandon the simplicity of nature in its wanderings: then and then only the mind and the senses, the receptive force and the plastic force, are developed in that happy equilibrium which is the soul of the beautiful and the condition of humanity."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 106.

"The law of simplicity and naïvety holds good of all fine art; for it is quite possible to be at once simple and sublime." —Schopenhauer, *The Art of Literature*, p. 31.

"To speak out once for all, man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and *he is only completely a man when he plays.*"—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 71.

CHAPTER II

THE INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN LIFE IN ART

ART is always, as we have seen, an expression of some aspect of life; but this expression is inevitably at the same time *interpretation.* Art never merely echoes nature; it gives nature *as the artist sees it,* thus putting it through the transmuting spectrum of the artist's personality. This is true even of semi-mechanical imitation of nature, as in amateur photography. Suppose you wish to take for a friend a photograph of a little wooded glen that seems to you particularly beautiful: What do you do: set up your camera and take the view? Not at all; you wait for the hour "when the light is right;" go about from one point of view to another until you find the one that best pleases you; and then take your picture. That is, of the almost innumerable views you might have taken, you choose this one, and in so doing say what this bit of nature means

to you. Thus, even when copying with a mechanical instrument, through selecting the particular aspect and point of view, you interpret the phase of the objective world in terms of its relation to your own spirit.

So with the most realistic of novels: the artist must select his material from the bewildering detail of life, and choose his point of view in portraying it, thus interpreting the life he copies. Suppose one were to attempt a realistic narration of one's own life: of what would one write? Why, everything, of course. Yes, and fill a library with the record of a month. It would be impossible to write out the life of one week, with no selection, recording every incident, every thought, every influence. That is not what is meant, of course, but the recording only of what is important. Ah, but who shall say what is important? Is it not evident that the most realistic narration of a week's life would bring certain facts strongly into the foreground, since they would seem most essential to the narrator; other facts, appearing to him as less significant, would be subordinated in the background; while a multitude of other facts would be suppressed alto-

gether, since they would seem to have no value, and in many instances might not even be recalled? Yet of the facts so suppressed or forgotten might not one easily be the critical element of the life seen from God's point of view in the perspective of the whole? Thus the most realistic narrator chooses his point of view, exercises a high degree of selection upon his material, and thus interprets life in terms of his own personality, in copying or recording it. The pity of the worse type of realistic novel is that it selects its material from moral disease instead of health, as if disease were truer than health! That notion is one of the strange anomalies of our time. Men exclaim: "We will see life;" and then proceed to smear themselves with the slime of its diseases! The truth is, disease can never be understood aright except from the point of view of the health of which it is the perversion. Still, even in the wrong kind of realism, dedicated to the exploitation of moral disease, art selects and arranges its material, treats it from a specific point of view, and thus interprets in attempting to copy.

Art is thus always, at the same time, real

and ideal. It is real, for it must grip reality somewhere to be art; it is ideal, for it never merely copies reality. The great artists have always been aware of this, consciously or instinctively; and it is noteworthy that the controversy concerning realism and idealism in art has been carried on, not chiefly by creative artists, but by critics and theorists on the outside.

Selection of material and point of view is, however, only the initial principle of idealism. In all art is, further, the tendency to lift nature to more adequate expression. Perhaps I can best illustrate this second principle by giving my own experience with Shakespeare. It had long puzzled me that Shakespeare is called the great realist, loyally holding the mirror up to human nature; yet all his characters speak beautiful poetry. Even Caliban upon his island talks of the "quick freshies" and the "bigger light and less" in language exquisitely poetical. For a time it seemed the explanation must be that actual men and women do not express themselves ordinarily in beautiful poetry; art must be beautiful, hence the discrepancy. The explanation did not satisfy, however. Then I began to see that, while all

Shakespeare's characters speak poetry, no two of them speak alike. Caliban does not speak as Miranda, nor Miranda like Prospero. Hamlet and Horatio are as different in expression as in character. Then I saw that what Shakespeare had done was to lift each character to a plane of adequate expression, causing each to speak not as the person does speak in life, but as, in the given situation actual men and women would speak if they could say just what they meant and say it perfectly. Take the supreme example: no Roman lion brought to bay, squandering half the world for a great passion, ever used the wealth of overwhelming imagery and vocabulary that comes from the lips of Shakespeare's Mark Antony; and no sensuous queen of Egypt, daughter of a hundred Ptolemies, fitting lioness mate for this Roman lion, ever spoke with the audacious sweep of language and imagery that comes from Cleopatra in the play; yet Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra speak just what those two characters, in the given circumstances of their lives, would have spoken, could they have said exactly what they felt and said it perfectly.

So it is with the artistic expression of deep meditation. Let one walk in the countryside some quiet autumn afternoon, when the winds are still and the leaves quietly falling, red and brown, from the boughs of the trees, the sky gray and still above; let one be alone or with one friend who understands and knows when not to speak; the breath comes slowly and regularly, and so does the heart beat. One moves with slow and measured step. In such a mood one does not usually speak in poetry; but if it were possible to express perfectly what one thinks and feels in such a mood, one would speak in just such measured, slow-moving, musical lines as those in the greatest of Wordsworth's sonnets:

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

This element of idealism is present in all the arts. Where in the French nature world can you find Corot's landscapes? Well, *everywhere,* and here, too, *after* you have seen and loved them in Corot's paintings; but nowhere before. It is almost as if that French nature world had been brooding for untold centuries, waiting to voice the meaning of its beauty; but only when Corot came and grasped its secret could it rise to full and free expression. So the dumb, half-wakened hunger of the French peasant, on the background of majestic nature, waited for the genius of Millet to understand it and express it in art. Thus the *Venus de Milo* bodies forth, not what any Greek woman was, but what all Greek women wanted to be, womanhood achieving its highest expression, not in nature, but in the interpretation of art.

Even more fully is this element of idealism present in music, the art capable of voicing

emotions that lie far too deep for words ever to express them. As we shall see in our study of music, its peculiar method and function bring this phase of idealism to its highest form.

This element in all the arts is balanced by a third principle of idealism—the *law of restraint.* This demands that the artist shall not express *all* he feels: he must express a part and suggest the rest, stimulating the imagination to go on beyond the limits of what is given. If an actor, for example, were to express all the passion of Lear or Othello, you would say he ranted, and the verdict would be just. Were music to embody all the composer feels, it would fail to move deeply. If a speaker expresses all he has to give, the effect is cheap. Behind what is given, must be a great reserve power unexpressed.

Thus when art attempts to do everything for its audience the effect is tawdry. That is one trouble with the theater to-day. The effort by skilful scene painting and other sensational effects to accomplish everything for the jaded senses and sluggish imagination of the spectator, tends to make him sit back in a semi-somnolent fashion merely to be played upon

from without; while the challenge to the actor is almost equally wanting. The result is that, with no active coöperation between artist and audience, the characters fail to impress themselves. Better the bare, unadorned stage of Shakespeare's time, with a sign-board to indicate Rome or London, where the situation challenged the actor to the vigorous effort to interpret life, than, in the attempt to accomplish everything for the senses and imagination, to fail wholly of the vital portrayal of character.

The principle is thus universal. The landscape artist dare not paint all he sees, but must creatively interpret his vision instead of imitating nature. In music it is the deep wealth of emotion unexpressed that gives to the melody its power to sweep one on to the bosom of the sea of feeling.

With all art that portrays life in relation to law there is a further element of idealism in carrying the laws to greater fulfillment than appears normally in life. Literature especially does this. In our life tendencies are evident, but incomplete. The threads are spun a little way and then pitiless Atropos cuts them off,

and how those tangled threads may be woven into the complete garment of life behind the veil, we cannot see; but the true artist sees. Indeed, he is artist partly because he is prophet, with a vision of life brought full circle. In life, the curtain may fall on any one of the scenes of the never-finished drama; in the play, it may not fall until the five full acts are complete. In life, any one who is growing dies too soon: there are always incomplete tendencies, potentialities broken off; but in art, the ethical motive, laid down in the beginning, must be completed in the end. In our world, not all mad ambition brings the tragedy of *Macbeth,* not all unfounded jealousy the pitiful eclipse at the end of *Othello,* not all introspective absorption, with the will balanced between opposing motives, the black disaster of *Hamlet;* but in Shakespeare these conclusions inexorably follow. Thus art interprets life by bringing its actual tendencies of good and evil to that more complete fulfillment toward which religion and philosophy have always groped.

Further, in all the arts is an element of idealism which may be called *atmosphere.* It

is this that unifies a masterpiece and gives the key to the spirit of the whole. Nowhere is there a better illustration than in the paintings of Titian. What is it that makes his pictures so wonderful an interpretation of Venice? Not the nude figures, the bit of mountain, the sea or the radiant sky; but the luxuriant wealth of warm golden light poured over the whole, transfiguring the landscape, lifting the nude bodies away from all possible association with illness or death, giving unity and interpreting the whole.

So the subtle "light that never was on sea or land" is more than anything else the key to Corot's impression. In the *Inferno* of Dante there is one dominant atmosphere, made of darkness deepened into darkness, set off by vermilion flame; in the *Purgatorio* another, made up of all the beauty of the natural world; in the *Paradiso* a third, with light multiplied into light, till the radiant shining is all but unendurable. Similarly there is one unifying and interpretative atmosphere in a fugue of Bach's, a nocturne of Chopin's, or in the third movement of the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven.

Besides these five elements of idealism in

art, there is a final principle, in that art, to be sound, must present the phase of life it portrays in true relation to the whole. This applies particularly to the portrayal of evil. This is dangerous in its effect only when evil is pictured out of relation to the whole of life, as for instance, in the worse sort of the so-called French novel (which is not produced, by the way, exclusively in France) where a moral evil is dressed in such beautiful garments that it is mistaken for the good, and so becomes seductively misleading. The great masters never make this mistake: in their portrayal evil is as repulsive in form as it is offensive in meaning. No daughter was ever led to unfilial conduct by the example of Goneril and Regan in *King Lear;* no one was ever tempted to a career of deception by the example of Iago. We despise these characters, and they in no way seduce us to imitation of their behavior.

Thus Dante uses coarse epithets and imagery increasingly painful to the senses, to clothe the darker sins as he descends the pit of hell. That the principle is not confined to moral evil, however, is evident in the work of such

painters as Millet and Bastien-Lepage, the wonder of whose portrayal of peasant life is that the phase studied is given in such sound relation to the whole of life as to interpret its very soul.

Let me give an illustration of this principle in the field of the novel. Some years ago Upton Sinclair studied the notorious packing-house district of Chicago and portrayed its horrors in the novel, *The Jungle,* widely read here and abroad, which helped vitally to the reform of the evil conditions it exploited. Now I have no doubt that every incident given in the novel could be paralleled in the packing-house district of Chicago, and that the mass of these facts had come under the direct observation of the author; yet I have no hesitation in saying that the story as a whole is *untrue* to the life it presents. What the author did, after exhaustive investigation of the horrors of that district of Chicago, was to gather them all together and heap them upon the head of one devoted woman and family. The result was a more or less effective reform document, but a novel with a loss of sound perspective, thus artistically, and hence ethically, untrue to the

life it portrayed. The same criticism may be passed upon a more recent social document, exploiting the evils of the "white slave traffic" —Kauffman's *House of Bondage.*

It is on the basis of this principle, little as it is understood, that the work of Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Shaw, Wilde and Sudermann must ultimately be judged, as also the didactic dramas, such as *The Passing of the Third Floor Back, The Servant in the House, Everywoman, The Terrible Meek,* which have enjoyed such vogue recently. Much second-rate work, that is widely popular for the moment, is weeded out and forgotten after a little time, just because the artist lacked the greatness to see the part in true perspective and sound relation to the whole, and so became the partisan rather than the true creator.

Let us sum up our work to this point, formulating the answer to our first question: *Art is then the adequate and harmonious expression and interpretation, through the medium of personality and in definitely limited form, of some phase of man's life or relation to nature in true relation to the whole.* This statement is not intended as a definition in the ordinary

sense, but as a thesis, gathering together all the elements studied as forming art. Simplifying the statement, retaining the most definitive elements: *Art is the adequate and harmonious expression and interpretation of some phase of man's life in true relation to the whole.*

"Art rests upon a kind of religious sense: it is deeply and ineradicably in earnest. Thus it is that Art so willingly goes hand in hand with Religion."—Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, p. 174.

"The secret, mysterious relations of the human heart to the strange nature around it, have not yet come to an end. In its eloquent silence, this latter still speaks to the heart just as it did a thousand years ago; and what was told in the very gray of antiquity is understood to-day as easily as then. For this reason it is that the legend of *nature* ever remains the inexhaustible resource of the poet in his intercourse with his people."—Wagner, in "Der Freischütz in Paris," *Art Life and Theories*, p. 99.

"The essence of the Scandinavian, as indeed of all pagan mythologies, we found to be recognition of the divineness of nature; sincere communion of man with the mysterious invisible powers visibly seen at work in the world round him. This, I should say, is more sincerely done in the Scandinavian than in any mythology I know. Sincerity is the great character of it. Superior sincerity (far superior) consoles us for the total want of old Grecian grace. Sincerity, I think, is better than grace. I feel that these old northmen were looking into nature with open eye and soul most earnest, honest; childlike, and yet manlike; with a great-hearted simplicity and depth and freshness, in a true, loving, admiring, unfearing way."—Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, p. 30.

CHAPTER III

PRIMITIVE SOURCES OF ART

THAT all the arts spring from a common historic basis has already been indicated. The law of evolution from the homogeneous to the differentiated and specialized, that Spencer traced throughout the biological world, is evident in the history of art. All the fine arts are present in germ in an act of religious worship in the early Greek world, when a hymn was sung in honor of the god, and accompanied with orchestric dancing. The interpretative dancing was the basis of sculpture, and from sculpture, with scarcely a line of demarcation, sprang painting. The singing was the basis of music; while the hymn itself represented poetry, from which, by the way, science and philosophy were later developed. Thus each of the typical fine arts practised to-day has been differentiated and specialized in function out of a simple unified historical source.

Note, further, the intimate connection of all early art with religion. Indeed, while the impulse of love and the desire to record action and event coöperated in the birth of art, the main inspiration came from religion; and through much of the history of the arts the association with religion continues intimate. Architecture builds temples, sculpture and painting adorn them, music and poetry are chiefly concerned with worship. Even to-day all these arts find an important function in serving religion; and while that is no longer their main purpose, the road was long the arts were compelled to travel before they could free themselves from being merely the handmaidens of religion, and attain their independent functions as ideal expressions of the spirit of man. Remember the long centuries of Byzantine painting when art was merely religious symbolism, its pictures, pegs on which to hang the teachings of faith; or consider at how late a period the secular drama freed itself from the conventions of the mediæval mystery and morality plays.

With the homogeneous simplicity of primi-

tive life, religion was not separated from other aspects of existence, but permeated them all; in a profoundly true sense life itself was religion. Born under this dominant religious inspiration, early art was deeply serious. It was concerned with the universal questions of man's existence, and had a unity and comprehensiveness not present equally in later differentiated forms of art. Indeed, long before conscious art is born, there is accumulated a great storehouse of popular thought, feeling and imagination. It springs directly out of life, dealing with the two universal aspects of existence—Man and Nature. The legends slowly grew, told over by the aged to the young before the hearthstone, sung by wandering minstrels at the halls of chieftains, molded and remolded from age to age, until, when finally written down, they represent the refined, condensed result of generations upon generations of early life.

The power of primitive men, with memories unaided and uncrippled by note-books, to preserve and hand on such a body of material, is beyond all that we, with our mechanical de-

vices and printed books, can understand.* Thus the human mind was the tablet upon which the primitive artist wrote; but just for that reason his creation was less crystallized and more subject to change. While primitive men regarded their inherited legends with religious veneration, still the plastic mind, receiving and transmitting them, improved and refined them as time went on.

Thus the expression of early life has correlative strength and weakness as compared with later artistic masterpieces. In such a literary creation as the *Divine Comedy* or *Faust* there is the advantage of unified and complete art in the work as a whole. We get the personal reaction on life of one great mind and the statement of one man's philosophy.

Mythology lacks this unity resulting from the world-view of a single great mind, but it has condensed vitality and deals with universal material. It is of two main types determined

* "There are thousands of Brahmans even now, when so little inducement exists for Vedic studies, who know the whole of the *Rig-Veda* by heart and can repeat it; and what applies to the *Rig-Veda* applies to many other books."—F. Max Müller, *India: What Can It Teach Us,* p. 81. Longmans, Green, & Co., London, 1883.

by its two subjects—Man and Nature. These are of course interwoven, but now one, now the other, is dominant. The contrasting types will be evident if we compare the main body of Aryan legend with that produced by the Semites. As far back as we can trace the Aryans they lived in settled habitations, in village communities. As cultivators of the soil they depended for their existence upon the regular recurrence of the seasons, the shining of the sun and the falling of the rain. Depending thus upon Nature, with their attention constantly drawn to her activities, their mythology was naturally in the main a poetic interpretation of those activities and their influence on man. The all-enfolding sky, married to the earth-mother through the life-giving rain, the storm gods driving their spotted deer or full-uddered cows across the heaven, the life-giving sun, the dawn—housewife of the sky: these were the objects of Aryan worship and the subjects of Aryan mythology.

In the earliest period this mythology is remarkably fluid, the life-giving principle of Nature being worshiped easily under any of its manifold forms; but as various races de-

veloped out of the parent stem, more definite mythologies were differentiated under the influence of new conditions of life. One branch of the race, migrating to what became Persia, where the strong contrast is of day and night, light and darkness, developed a nature dualism, opposing Ormuzd, the bright god, to Ahriman, the spirit of darkness.

Another branch, entering the beautiful peninsula of Hellas, with the sea and the mountains everywhere, each valley with its distinguishing individuality and the radiant sky over all, evolved the most beautiful nature polytheism the world has seen. Every river, dell and tree in the forest had its presiding spirit, while all these divine powers were gathered in the pantheon of gods upon Olympus.

Still another portion of the mother race, settling upon the northern shores of Europe and upon the peninsulas that are now Denmark, Norway and Sweden, found a nature world of forbidding majesty, where life was a perpetual struggle against destructive forces —the forest and its wild beasts, the giants of ice, cold and snow, and the demon of destructive fire. Thus these men developed a dualism

in which man's will and intelligence, incarnate in the bright gods—Odin, Thor, Balder, Freya and the rest—were opposed to the Jötuns of the north, the Fenrir wolf and the Midgard Serpent, Loki, the demon of fire.

The Semitic peoples, on the other hand, as far back as we can trace them, were nomads. Living upon flocks and herds, climbing the mountains when the valleys were dry, crossing to fertile plains beyond, adding to their sustenance by marauding raids upon weaker and more settled tribes, their existence depended less upon nature than upon human courage, intelligence and leadership, with close social organization. It was the strong, patriarchal chieftain, the brave warrior, the unified warfare against common foes that guaranteed their existence. Thus the mythology they developed centered upon human character and action rather than upon nature. They worshiped at first the dead chieftain, lifted to that mysterious other world but supposed still to have some power upon this. As their religion developed, they came to worship the god of the tribe, the race, and finally the king and ruler of the universe. In the whole process it was

human power, justice, benevolence and, in the end, love, upon which the mind of the Semites was focused, and not mainly the forces and activities of the nature world. Thus their accumulated body of legend concerned mainly the history of human action, of brave deeds, persecutions endured, tribal and racial victories.

Of course the two tendencies overlap. Among all the Indo-European races a wealth of human legend gets grafted on the older and more characteristic body of nature myths. The origin of the latter is, in the end, quite forgotten, and elements from human tradition get associated with even the oldest nature stories. Similarly, we find the Elohim beside Jehovah in the *Old Testament,* and the genii of Mohammedan lore. Still the striking differentiation in type, springing from original differences in racial activity and environment, remains.

The importance of the two themes of all primitive art is evident if one remembers that all forces of human progress reduce to two—the action of man and the reaction of nature. Moreover, the two great aspects of the devel-

opment of world religion have been the progressive discovery of the Divine, if I may so express it, through the two chapters of revelation—Man and Nature, ending in a union of the two in a conception of God as at once *in* the world, as the immanent life of all life "in whom we live and move and have our being," and *above* the world, as the loving Father of spirits in whose image we are made. Thus profound and universal are the two themes of primitive art.

The *vitality of treatment* in early art is as impressive as its universality in subject. Take, for instance, the old Brynhild-Sigurd story as it is given in the *Elder Edda* and the *Song of the Volsungs.* Here, even more than in Wagner's rendering, is it universally human in elements and vital in treatment. The fragmentary songs of the *Elder Edda,* wild but majestic in irregular alliterative verse, date perhaps from the eighth to the tenth centuries. The *Volsung's Saga,* a prose epic of somewhat later date (probably the thirteenth century), follows closely the older material, but gives the story in more complete form. Thus both represent the early working over of the body

of legend handed down through generations.

Two elements of Fate are in the story from the beginning. The first is the hoard of treasure, guarded by the dragon Fafnir. The other is the doom of Brynhild, the battle may, who, for breaking the will of Odin, is pierced with the sleep-thorn and confined in the castle surrounded by fire. Sigurd, fated and fearless, having slain the dragon, comes to the flame-girt castle:

"By long roads rides Sigurd, till he comes at the last up on to Hindfell, . . . and he sees before him on the fell a great light, as of fire burning, and flaming up even unto the heavens; and when he came thereto, lo, a shield-hung castle before him, and a banner on the topmost thereof: into the castle went Sigurd, and saw one lying there asleep, and all-armed. Therewith he takes the helm from off the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman; and she was clad in a byrny as closely set on her as though it had grown to her flesh; so he rent it from the collar downwards; and then the sleeves thereof, and ever the sword bit on it as if it were cloth. Then said Sigurd that over-long had she lain asleep; but she asked—

'What thing of great might is it that has pre-

vailed to rend my byrny, and draw me from my sleep? . . . Ah, is it so, that here is come Sigurd Sigmundson, bearing Fafnir's helm on his head and Fafnir's bane in his hand?'

Then answered Sigurd . . .

'Of the Volsung's kin is he who has done the deed; but now I have heard that thou art daughter of a mighty king, and folk have told us that thou wert lovely and full of lore, and now will I try the same.'

Then Brynhild sang—

'Long have I slept
And slumbered long,
Many and long are the woes of mankind,
By the might of Odin
Must I bide helpless
To shake from off me the spells of slumber.

Hail to the day come back!
Hail, sons of the daylight!
Hail to thee, dark night, and thy daughter!
Look with kind eyes a-down,
On us sitting here lonely,
And give unto us the gain that we long for.'

. . . . . .

Then said Sigurd, 'Teach us the lore of mighty matters!'

She said, 'Belike thou cannest more skill in all

than I; yet will I teach thee; yea, and with thanks, if there be aught of my cunning that will in anywise pleasure thee, either of runes or of other matters that are the root of things; but let us now drink together, and may the Gods give to us twain a good day, that thou mayst win good help and fame from my wisdom, and that thou mayst hereafter mind thee of that which we twain speak together.' " *

So she gives him the drink of love, and then with childlike simplicity yet with mature love of wisdom, these two sit down together, with the flames all round about, while she sings him the sacred runes—runes of war and of pity, of safety and thought—"wise words, sweet words, speech of great game."

It is significant of this old Norse land that the woman, repository of wisdom, teaches, while the man learns.

"Sigurd spake now, 'Sure no wiser woman than thou art one may be found in the wide world; yea, yea, teach me more yet of thy wisdom!' . . .

She spake withal—

'Be kindly to friend and kin, and reward not their

* *The Story of the Volsungs*, edited by H. Halliday Sparling, pp. 68-70. Walter Scott, London.

trespasses against thee; bear and forbear, and win for thee thereby long enduring praise of men.

Take good heed of evil things: a may's love, and a man's wife; full oft thereof doth ill befall!

Let not thy mind be overmuch crossed by unwise men at thronged meetings of folk; for oft these speak worse than they wot of; lest thou be called a dastard, and art minded to think that thou art even as is said; slay such an one on another day, and so reward his ugly talk.

. . . . . .

Let not fair women beguile thee, such as thou mayst meet at the feast, so that the thought thereof stand thee in stead of sleep, and a quiet mind; yea, draw them not to thee with kisses and other sweet things of love.

If thou hearest the fool's word of a drunken man, strive not with him being drunk with drink and witless; many a grief, yea, and the very death, groweth from out such things.

Fight thy foes in the field, nor be burnt in thine own house.

. . . . . .

Look thou with good heed to the wiles of thy friends; but little skill is given to me, that I should foresee the ways of thy life; yet good it were that hate fell not on thee from those of thy wife's house.'

Sigurd spake, 'None among the sons of men can be found wiser than thou; and thereby swear I, that thee will I have as my own, for near to my heart thou liest.'

She answers, 'Thee would I fainest choose, though I had all men's sons to choose from.'

And thereto they plighted troth both of them." *

It is so far away, yet so near—this Sigurd-Brynhild story. What universality of human emotions, what majestic simplicity of expression, what strength and beauty of character, what permanent wisdom it contains. To read it is like a draught from some pure mountain spring in the midst of a primeval forest.

Had Sigurd been able to follow the wise teachings of Brynhild, all would have been well, but Fate willed otherwise. So Sigurd, riding to King Guiki's palace, is given the magic drink by Queen Grimhild and married to her daughter, Gudrun. In his bewildered state, he lends himself to the scheme of Gunnar, Gudrun's brother, to deceiving Brynhild into marrying Gunnar as the one who had freed her from the fire. Through the taunting of Brynhild by Gudrun the deceptions are

* *The Story of the Volsungs*, pp. 76, 77.

discovered. Sigurd comes to his senses, urges Brynhild to accept him even now; but she:

"'Such words may nowise be spoken, nor will I have two kings in one hall; I will lay my life down rather than beguile Gunnar the King. . . . I swore an oath to wed the man who should ride my flaming fire, and that oath will I hold to, or die.'" *

So woe is heaped on woe. Sigurd is murdered through Gunnar's scheming, at Brynhild's demand. Brynhild, slaying herself, prophesies the woes to come, and prays as a last boon to be burned on the funeral pyre with Sigurd—

"'And lay there betwixt us a drawn sword, as in the other days when we twain stepped into one bed together; and then may we have the name of man and wife, nor shall the door swing to at the heel of him as I go behind him.'" †

How big it is with the elemental forces of life. Here is no low intrigue, no finesse of modern deception, the very wrong is on the scale of majesty, inextricably interwoven with

* *The Story of the Volsungs*, p. 107.
† *Ibid.*, p. 124.

the fate of life. How wild, loyal, fierce in hate, strong in love, true in instinct, this splendid Brynhild is: a type of glorious and tragic womanhood for all time. How the pessimism of a Schopenhauer, the wail of a modern Leopardi pale beside this elemental tragedy!

Gudrun, overshadowed by Brynhild, lending herself to her mother's deception to win Sigurd, has her own majesty and suffers her own bitterness. I know nothing else in primitive literature more profoundly moving in spirit, more tensely impressive in form than the stanzas of the *Elder Edda* giving the woe of Gudrun over Sigurd dead:

"Gudrun of old days
Drew near to dying
As she sat in sorrow
Over Sigurd;
Yet she sighed not
Nor smote hand on hand,
Nor wailed she aught
As other women.

Then went earls to her,
Full of all wisdom,
Fain help to deal
To her dreadful heart:

Hushed was Gudrun
Of wail, or greeting,
But with a heavy woe
Was her heart a-breaking.

. . . . .

Then spake Giaflaug,
Guiki's sister:
'Lo upon earth
I live most loveless
Who of five mates
Must see the ending,
Of daughters twain
And three sisters,
Of brethren eight,
And abide behind lonely.'

Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail and greeting,
So heavy was she
For her dead husband,
So dreadful-hearted
For the King laid dead there.

. . . . .

Then spake Gullrond,
Guiki's daughter—
'O foster-mother,
Wise as thou mayst be,

Naught canst thou better
The young wife's bale.'
And she bade uncover
The dead King's corpse.

She swept the sheet
Away from Sigurd,
And turned his cheek
Towards his wife's knees—
'Look on thy loved one
Lay lips to his lips,
E'en as thou wert clinging
To thy king alive yet!'

Once looked Gudrun—
One look only,
And saw her lord's locks
Lying all bloody,
The great man's eyes
Glazed and deadly,
And his heart's bulwark
Broken by sword-edge.

Back then sank Gudrun,
Back on the bolster,
Loosed was her head array,
Red did her cheeks grow,
And the rain-drops ran
Down over her knees.

Then wept Gudrun,
Guiki's daughter,
So that the tears flowed
Through the pillow;
As the geese withal
That were in the homefield,
The fair fowls the may owned,
Fell a-screaming." *

The tragedy seems cosmic in the sweep of its impressiveness; the very weeping of Gudrun is like a storm rending some northern forest. What a depth and reach there is in it all of the simple universal elements that make life in all time! Love, hate, struggle, death, pride, grief—all are here, and with what wondrous *vitality*. If the passions seem more ruthless and the woe more overwhelming than in life to-day, that is only because primitive men stood closer to the great realities of life, with no barrier of convention between. Their senses were unjaded, their emotions fresh and violent. They lived closer to the dawn and the sunshine, the rain and the cold. Night and its stars arched over them, and they met the world with untired wonder. This is em-

* *The Story of the Volsungs*, pp. 114-118.

bodied in their very language which was natural metaphor. What our poetry accomplishes in a phrase or a made figure, they expressed in a word, since every word we use for a spiritual concept was once a natural metaphor, carrying physical association. "Ghost" and "spirit" were alike the "breath"; to be "corrupted" was to be crumbled up in character as rocks or earth crumble with the spring frost.* So in all primitive description metaphor precedes simile, the wild outpourings of *Beowulf* come at an earlier racial epoch than the smooth comparisons of Homer.

So primitive art is *true,* with a simple ethical earnestness coming from a sound direct reaction upon life. In form it is artistic, with a natural spontaneity equalled only in the highest achievements of the conscious artist of later times. With what unconscious skill it uses just the word, the image that carries the thought, repeating the vital phrase at the recurring

* "He who spake first of a 'dilapidated' fortune, what an image must have risen up before his mind's eye of some falling house or palace, stone detaching itself from stone, till all had gradually sunk into desolation and ruin."—Suplée's *Trench on Words,* p. 20. A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, 1887.

crisis of its dramatic situation. With what fugue-like solemnity the song of Gudrun's lament repeats the dirge of its refrain:

"Naught gat Gudrun
Of wail or greeting;"

the repetition being given with just change enough to grip the imagination. Thus all great qualities of art are here, with the inevitable naturalness of deep child-like appreciation.

As in this Norse literature, so everywhere, the earliest art is the working over and writing down of the store of primitive legends accumulated through centuries of racial life. The mythology and religion of those ages preceding the dawn of recorded history are thus the great source from which the arts spring. So, too, these form the permanent storehouse of material and of vital inspiration to which the arts must perpetually return. As Antæus was renewed in strength when he touched again his mother, the earth, so the late-born artist, surrounded by a conventional civilization, with jaded senses and tired heart, is born anew when he bathes in these fountains that flow at the dawn of civilization. Compare the

use of Greek mythology in classic sculpture, renaissance painting and Elizabethan poetry. Remember the wealth of Christian and Hebraic story in Italian painting and English poetry. Tennyson's use of Celtic legend and Wagner's of the Norse are but two of the multitude of illustrations of this turning backward to the springs of racial life for material and inspiration.

"It is precisely minds of the first order that will never be specialists. For their very nature is to make the whole of existence their problem; and this is a subject upon which they will every one of them in some form provide mankind with a new revelation."—Schopenhauer, *The Art of Literature*, p. 55.

"People always fancy that we must become old to become wise; but, in truth, as years advance, it is hard to keep ourselves as wise as we were. Man becomes, indeed, in the different stages of his life, a different being; but he cannot say that he is a better one, and, in certain matters, he is as likely to be right in his twentieth, as in his sixtieth year.

We see the world one way from a plain, another way from the heights of a promontory, another from the glacier fields of the primary mountains. We see, from one of these points, a larger piece of the world than from the other; but that is all, and we cannot say that we see more truly from any one than from the rest. When a writer leaves monuments on the different steps of his life, it is chiefly important that he should have an innate foundation and goodwill; that he should, at each step, have seen and felt clearly, and that, without any secondary aims, he should have said distinctly and truly what has passed in his mind. Then will his writings, if they were right at the step where they originated, remain always right, however the writer may develop or alter himself in after times."—Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann and Soret*, p. 512.

CHAPTER IV

DEFINING FORCES BEHIND ART: THE ARTIST

SO far we have been considering the common nature of the arts and the generic sources from which they all spring. Now we are to study those influences which determine the specific characteristics of a masterpiece. It has been shown that the first cause of the unique appeal of each work of art is that the common basis of human experience finds expression only through the medium of the artist's personality; thus inevitably his character and experience must in some measure stamp themselves upon all that he produces. This is true even of the most objective and imitative work. Let an accident occur and be witnessed by a hundred persons; let each of these write out faithfully an account of what he saw: there would be a hundred varying stories, no two identical. Moreover, a good reader of character could tell something

of the quality of the different personalities from the accounts written. To narrate an incident is to give something of the narrator as well as the incident. How much more then when the work is bodied forth from the creative personality of the artist. Take, for illustration, what may be regarded as a purely objective dramatic study—a play that has come to wide fame through musical setting and stage portrayal—Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. Here is a study of a phase of human perversity, the type of fascinatingly repulsive woman who represents the most subtle and refined form of depravity in modern life; yet, objective as it is, who would have been interested and able to portray it except the sensitive, strangely gifted, morbid genius, Oscar Wilde? Is it an accident that his thought brooded for many years over the seductively repellent theme before the play was written?

No music lover can mistake the characteristic work of Beethoven for that of Mozart. What makes the difference? To answer, one must turn to the lives and temperaments of the two men. In Mozart's case one must remember the sweet, open disposition, the happy

home and sunny temper, the genial friendliness and delight in social play, the amazing youthful genius, resulting in an astounding range of compositions in childhood, and concert tours in which his fame as child prodigy was universal, without spoiling his modest and fine character. Absorbed wholly in music, he enjoyed regular and admirable education in his art under the excellent discipline of his gifted father. Struggles and disappointments in the period of young manhood he had to endure, it is true, with difficult financial circumstances (accentuated by his cheerful carelessness) recurring to the end of his brief life. Yet these shadows could not permanently cloud his vivacious spirit; and he continued to compose with a celerity, sureness and consistent beauty, such as can result only from the highest natural gifts existing in the happiest combination. Can one not then understand why his works uniformly delight and rest us with entrancing melodies, smooth harmonies and a perfect unity of idea and execution?

With Beethoven, on the other hand, one must recall the sad childhood, the tragic home with a drunken father, the early contact with

the sordid miseries of life, the temperamental intensity, pride and isolation. His development was slow and painful, carried out by hard effort, and in the face of halting and inadequate public response. Then, when his wonderful genius had overcome the obstacles in his path and arrived at full expression, descended upon him at thirty that frightful curse, the destruction of the very sense of hearing through which he could enjoy his own art. Thus shut off from his kind, proud and solitary as Prometheus upon Caucasus, gnawed ever by the vulture of suffering, going forward in his lonely silence by sheer indomitable will to the creation of his masterpieces—compositions which he, alas! could not hear except with the inner ear of the soul,—Beethoven achieved that music, smiting in titanic majesty, unparalleled in compelling power and sombre grandeur, born of will and intellect striving with fate. Thus the difference in the music of Mozart and Beethoven is but the expression of the contrast in character and experience of the two men.

Fra Angelico and Fra Lippo Lippi both worked in Florence in the same period—the

happy forenoon of renaissance art. They grew up alike under the same general influences in painting; yet their works are opposite in character. Fra Angelico's are purely spiritual, lifted away from the earth, each painting being an act of worship; while Fra Lippo Lippi's are sweetly natural, all of the earth with its sensuous charm, the subjects nominally religious but with really no spiritual significance. What explains the contrast?

Let one recall Fra Angelico's saintly character and natural call to the monastic life, his early retired years in Tuscany, the removal to Umbria in the fresh responsiveness of young manhood, where he came under the spell of St. Francis and the spiritual aspiration of the middle age, the return to Florence and the eighteen years of brooding in the monastery on the height of Fiesole, overlooking the beautiful Arno valley. Is it any wonder that, when the Medici called him down from Fiesole to Florence to adorn the newly rebuilt monastery of San Marco, he covered its walls with those exquisitely spiritual frescoes: painting in the lunette over a door in the cloister arcade that Christ, welcomed, with human tenderness,

as guest by two Dominican brothers, that half-length mystic Christ rising from the tomb; or, in the corridor above, Mary and the Angel of the Annunciation, lifted above the human, the supreme moment given on the background of a bit of monastery garden? Nearly every cell is frescoed with paintings of similar spiritual character. Here a Christ on the cross, with a group of mourning women and saints of the church gathered about; there a sweet, deep-eyed Jesus child, on the mother's lap, looking out and beyond. One readily believes that Fra Angelico knelt in prayer before daring to paint a picture, so entirely is each of his paintings an act of worship, expressing his implicit faith and unworldly aspiration.

With Fra Lippo one must remember the orphaned and vagabond childhood, his early abandonment to the monastic life (for which he had no call) by the surviving relative whose only wish apparently was to be rid of the child's support, the stories of his romantic adventures, which, even if the wildest of them be disbelieved, sufficiently indicate his character and experience. Let one recall the legend, accepted evidently without question by those who

regarded themselves as his descendants, of his carrying away to his home the novice, Lucrezia Buti, who served as his model while painting the frescoes at Prato, of his union with her from which Filippino Lippi was born. Cannot one then understand why Fra Lippo's angels are sweet girls from Prato and Florence, why he paints the charm of nature, the faces of monks and worldlings just as they were, why there is no spiritual appeal in all his work, while his demure madonnas seem ever about to break into a laugh as if they too appreciated the absurdity of Fra Lippo Lippi's attempting to paint madonnas?

Let us take a brief concrete illustration from a field of art, poetry, that may be introduced here. The two masters who divided the leadership of English poetry during the middle of the nineteenth century, each left, fortunately for our purpose, a brief confession of faith in beautiful poetic form, written toward the close of life. Tennyson asked that *Crossing the Bar* be placed at the end of every complete edition of his works, while Browning's *Epilogue to Asolando* appeared as the concluding poem of the little book which was published on the

day of the author's death. Thus we are warranted in taking these as final confessions of the two masters. Both artists were Englishmen, contemporaries, subject to much the same influences; yet compare the two expressions, turning first to Tennyson.

Crossing the Bar.*

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar."

* Tennyson, *Works*, p. 837. Macmillan & Co., New York, 1893.

Tennyson's lyric makes its full impression at a single reading. There is no doubt as to its meaning, and this is given with the direct simplicity of the highest art. The imagery is majestic, restrained and entirely clear. The music is so liquid and pellucid that to attempt to set the lyric to music is usually to lower the moving beauty of its melody. The whole poem is an example of art so perfect as to seem spontaneous nature, yet consciously molded in every detail of its construction. This is particularly evident in the music, which depends not only upon the open, liquid sound of the words, but still more on the handling of the meter. The stanzas are all simple quatrains, dominately in iambic measure—the simplest foot in English;* yet with subtle changes pro-

* It should be noted that methods of scansion drawn from Greek and Latin poetry do not strictly apply to English. Classic poetry depended mainly upon time measurement, so that it is possible to measure the syllables with the accuracy of notes of music. Our poetry depends mainly upon accent. Where the classic said long and short syllables, we must say strong and weak, or accented and unaccented. It is true we use the principle of time measurement, since we inevitably give more time to the accented syllables, but with nothing of the exactness of classic poetry. Thus when we use the terms of classic scansion we must recognize that they have different meaning in application to our poetry. An iambus is a foot with one unaccented and one accented

ducing the most artistic effect. The first line, for example, scanned prosaically would read:

Sunset and evening star;

but it is not that at all. It is:

Sunset and evening star;

really two dactyls and a strong syllable. Note how the change brings out the hinging words, "sunset" and "star," on which the imagery and meaning of the poem alike depend.

The second line is a regular three-foot iambic; the third a long swinging line of five feet, which we tend to read more rapidly; while the movement slows down again in the closing three-foot, monosyllabic line.

The second stanza begins with the long sweeping five-foot line, followed by a slower three-foot line, again monosyllabic; then once

syllable, represented ⏑ —. It is the simplest foot in English, because our language moves naturally in that order of syllables. It is possible to take whole passages of the prose of deep feeling (as from De Quincey) and scan them as iambic verse by changing an occasional word or syllable.

more the five feet; while the last line is irregular in meter like the first in the poem. Scanned as regular iambic, it would be:

Tŭrns ā gaĭn hōme.

On the contrary it reads:

Tūrns ă gaĭn hōme.

making really one dactyl and one strong syllable. With what inexpressible tenderness and impressiveness that hinging word of the whole poem, "home," is borne in upon us by the melody, through the slight irregularity of the meter.

Once more the same irregularity occurs—at the beginning of stanza three:

T̄wilĭght ănd ēvĕnĭng bell.

Again it is the definitive, image-carrying words of the poem which receive the impressive accent. Don't think these variations accidental: *there are no accidents in art.* Often the artist

may not be conscious of certain details of his technique; but he is poet just because he chooses instinctively the melodiously appropriate word and the inevitable meter. With Tennyson, however, preëminently conscious artist, working deliberately for effects after a lifetime of technical training, it is hard not to believe that results such as those cited above were planned and consciously molded.

In content the poem expresses the matured faith of Tennyson's life, attained after battling with doubt in the arena of his century, facing and accepting, if reluctantly, the last generalizations of science, and journeying through the "Divine Comedy" of *In Memoriam*. It is simply the generic heart of Christianity, freed from limitations of sect and eccentricities of dogma, lifted and voiced in its essential meaning for the soul of man. From the questionings of his own mind and the feverish and clouded struggles of his time, Tennyson turns to rest on the bosom of this faith of so many generations of humanity, and in so doing finds peace.

Now turn to Browning:

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO.*

"At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

* Browning, *Works,* Camberwell edition, vol. XII, pp. 267, 268. Crowell & Co., New York, 1898.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
'Strive and thrive!' cry 'Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!' "

One is first of all impressed with the difficulty in reading the poem. It does not yield up its heart at once: one must know in advance something of the situation implied even to understand its meaning. One must think of Browning as speaking to some intimate friend with reference to that friend's thought of him when death has taken him. Will you pity me, I being who? In the latter half of the poem Browning answers splendidly the question, affirming who he is, and proclaiming what should be the sound attitude toward one who, after fighting straightforwardly, with unfaltering courage and faith, the battle here, has passed on to the next chapter in the unseen.

The imagery is strong and fresh, but involved, passing quickly from one suggested picture to another, with nothing of the calm restrained vision of Tennyson. The music is anything but pellucid, yet music undoubtedly there

is. The verse is trochaic (– ⌣), further away from common speech than iambic and more difficult to write. The lines are most irregular in length, varying from the dominant long six-foot line, opening each stanza, to the incisive, short, truncated two-foot line with which each closes. In the entire five-line stanza there are but two lines rhymed—the second and last, both short lines; and the single rhyme thus brings the music of the stanza back into itself, thus clinching the effect. All these elements of fresh, irregular music unite with the virile but often unmelodious words in a strong, inspiring trumpet call. If Tennyson's music is like the melodious wash of the slow-moving waves of a summer sea upon the sand, this music is like the music of a North Sea storm.

Equally striking is the contrast with Tennyson in thought. Browning's faith is also in a deep sense Christian, but it does not depend upon the centuries of historic belief and the record of what happened in the past, as Tennyson's. On the contrary, it springs directly from life. Because life has justified itself in so far as one has struggled toward the best, each chapter of pain or joy, failure or achieve-

ment, finding its significance in the growing man who is at each point the net resultant of all his yesterdays, Browning dares to believe that the untried will justify itself also, even in the dark shadow of death at the end of the path, and the unseen that lies past its mystery. His unquestioning faith in immortality springs from his life itself, in his simply daring to believe that the little arc of his experience somehow gives the curve of the infinite circle of God's truth.

Hence the function of the two men in relation to the modern spirit. Tennyson voiced the weight of despair that came with the discoveries and generalizations of modern science, the stumbling

> "Upon the great world's altar stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God," *

the wail of the child in the dark and the serene answer of historic faith, achieved through his own struggles in the Gethsemane of suffering. Browning, on the other hand, voiced a range of ideas still beyond us, shining like stars in the

* *In Memoriam*, canto LV.

heaven of the spirit to guide our path. No wonder Tennyson was the most popular poet of his time; while Browning, losing any large public response for the middle twenty years of his creative life, has still to wait for his full audience.

Thus behind each of these lyric confessions is the whole personality and experience of the artist. It is no accident that Tennyson postponed his personal happiness in marriage for twenty years for the sake of his art; while Browning's marriage—practically an elopement, under circumstances to which every biological and prudential counsel would have been opposed, but which in this instance was right—was a splendid masculine response to a great call of personal life. Tennyson was sensitive, shy, aristocratic and retiring, looking out from the seclusion of his watch-tower on the world of humanity, and solacing himself with a wonderland of chivalric dreams. Browning was forceful, impetuous, masculine, democratic in sympathy, interested in every phase of man and woman, and living vigorously in the world. Tennyson lived to write; in a profoundly true sense Browning wrote to live. Thus all that

the man was, in each instance, is incarnate in the two perfect bits of art.

It will be said that it is the biographies of these men that help us to understand the art. Yes, the principle works both ways; but contrast the revelation of personality in a work of art with what is given in the usual biography. The tendency of biography is to give chiefly external incident, which gossip may seize upon and which is truly interpreted only in relation to the character. "By their fruits ye shall know them," if you know all the fruit; but to judge the tree by one accidentally rotten apple at the end of the bough is surely unfair; yet that is what we do constantly in estimating human beings. Art, on the other hand, confesses, not the incident of the life, but the soul of the character, so that we get the confession only when we rise to the plane on which it is given. Thus such an expression of the heart of life can scarcely be misunderstood. We either get it, or fail to get it.

Of Andrea del Sarto, for instance, we have a gossipy biography by Vasari. We know his facile genius, early successes, his timid spirit and the insignificant returns he received for

his work. We have the more or less trustworthy story of his apparently unworthy love affair and marriage, and sad personal life. Vasari ought to have known the incidents with reasonable accuracy, since he worked for a time as pupil in Andrea's studio.

Put it all aside, and stand in the presence of those strangely elusive paintings that are everywhere in Florence: that *Madonna of the Harpies* with the sensuously molded body and beautiful oval face, but with no touch of conscious motherhood toward the child in her arms; that young *St. John* with the wonderfully lucent eyes, promising to be the masterpiece—the masculine counterpart of the *Sistine Madonna,* but which, after your hour before it, you sadly acknowledge just misses its aim; that *Deposition from the Cross* with its play of light and shadow, the wonderful white body of the dead Christ, the restrained sorrowing of the mother and passionate outpouring of human grief in Mary Magdalen. Go out to San Salvi and study his marvelous *Last Supper,* strong yet delicate in color, subtle in its psychology, interpreting the inner life with a sensitiveness and appreciation worthy

of modern times. Almost every one of the disciples seems asking himself the question, "Could I do it?"; while of all the faces the most powerfully moving is the Judas, who sits at the right hand of Christ. Leaning forward on the balls of his feet, one hand pressed against his breast, the other stretched out in a hopelessly appealing gesture, the face wan and sensitive under the tangled mass of hair: it is the one possible Judas I have seen in a painting. Return to the galleries of Florence and stand once more before the numerous self-portraits of Andrea, painted in profile or half-shadow, the face sensitive and hungry—almost that of his own Judas—the face of a man who, if he loved aright, could be lifted to great heights of achievement, while if his love were misplaced he might be led on and down to ruin. Then at last we understand and may even come to say: I know you, Andrea del Sarto, across the centuries I know your soul. It is something to be understood, is it not—even late—when one is filled with the sense of despairing loneliness and the bitter ache of failure gnaws at the heart? They did not understand you—the people about you, Lucrezia

and the rest; but for any man who has put his soul into forms of beauty the day of appreciation will dawn. It is they who, despairing alone, have never been able to sing the song or paint the picture, whose lot is most hard.

Similarly we have a record of Chopin's outer life. We know his sensitive, melancholy temperament, his struggles and disappointments, something of his love-affairs and the story of his social and artistic success; but how much deeper is the revelation of the man through his music. When we listen to those strangely moving melodies, those harmonies pushed almost to discord, those appeals to sad and tender sentiment till the very heart strings ache, we come to know the soul of Chopin with all its burden of revelation, its painful struggles, far-reaching hungers and aspirations.

"We live in this world only that we may go onward without ceasing, a peculiar help in this direction being that one enlightens the other by communicating his ideas; in the sciences and fine arts there is always more to learn."—Mozart, in Kerst, *Mozart: The Man and the Artist*, p. 89.

"I carry my thoughts about me for a long time, often a very long time, before I write them down; meanwhile my memory is so faithful that I am sure never to forget, not even in years, a theme that has once occurred to me. I change many things, discard, and try again until I am satisfied. Then, however, there begins in my head the development in every direction, and, inasmuch as I know exactly what I want, the fundamental idea never deserts me,—it arises before me, grows,—I see and hear the picture in all its extent and dimensions stand before my mind like a cast, and there remains for me nothing but the labor of writing it down, which is quickly accomplished when I have the time, for I sometimes take up other work, but never to the confusion of one with the other. You will ask me where I get my ideas. That I can not tell you with certainty; they come unsummoned, directly, indirectly,—I could seize them with my hands,—out in the open air; in the woods; while walking; in the silence of the nights; early in the morning; incited by moods, which are translated by the poet into words, by me into tones that sound, and roar and storm about me until I have set them down in notes."—Beethoven, in Kerst, *Beethoven: The Man and the Artist*, p. 29.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTIST AS REVEALED IN ART

IT is not only that the personality and experience of the artist mold all details of his art, while that in turn reveals his essential character. When an artist has worked through a long period of time, the different aspects of his development find full expression in the works coming in successive periods. If, then, his works are studied in the chronological order in which they were produced, they reveal intimately the development of the artist's mind, character and philosophy. With such a master as Goethe, for example, passing through many phases of life, experiencing a succession of intellectual, as of personal, love-affairs, this becomes deeply important. From the sentimental romanticism of *Werther,* the wild outpourings of *Götz,* and the early passionate scenes of *Faust,* through the classical restraint of *Tasso* and *Iphigenia* to *Wilhelm*

Meister and the noblest portions of *Faust,* on to the profundities and obscurities of the last written scenes of the *Second Part of Faust*—how wonderfully the achievement of Goethe's greatest work of art, his personality and character, is revealed.

The many-sided modern genius, Wagner, creator of music first, but poet, dramatic artist and impresario in only lesser degree, is equally revealed in the development of his character and life through struggles, adventures, miseries and achievements, in the succession of his works. From his early brilliant, but often bombastic, compositions, through the *Flying Dutchman* to *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin,* in which he found himself, on through the *Nibelungen Ring* and *Tristan und Isolde* to *Parsifal,* what development of genius, freedom, power and of fundamental philosophy of life is evidenced.

This holds even with so purely and consistently objective a dramatist as Shakespeare. The tradition of his outer life is dim; indeed, there are serious scholars who question whether the man who was born at Stratford-on-the-Avon in 1564 and died there in 1616 really

wrote the dramas that bear his name; yet we know Shakespeare, not only in the essentials of his spirit, but in all the unfolding of his art and philosophy of life, *merely through the dramas themselves.* Modern scholarship, exhausting all evidence internal and external, has given us substantially the chronology of the plays; and the changing spirit of these through the successive periods of the master's life reveals the master. Not that Shakespeare ever surely expresses himself in the words of any character: no other dramatist ever worked with such consistent objectivity as he. It is never Shakespeare who speaks, but always the dramatic character. Twice we long to identify him with his creation; but even in Hamlet and Prospero we cannot be sure; and if Shakespeare does express himself through the words spoken by these two, it is due to the agreement of the dramatic situation with the circumstances and mood in Shakespeare's own life at the time. Nevertheless, in each of the dramas the entire moral background reveals the master. How does the play focus as a whole in relation to life? What elements are brought into the foreground, what subordi-

nated or suppressed? What is the dominant mood of the whole? The answers to these questions give Shakespeare.

In the first play independently from his hand—*Love's Labor's Lost,* produced probably when he was twenty-six, there is nothing of the ethical depth and profound grasp of the laws of life that mark his later plays. It is full of a young man's exuberant delight in the beauty of nature and the amazing variety of human character and action. With tiresome quibbles and adolescent punning, its mood is one of pure joy in just being able to look out on the world. There is the same warm interest in every absurdity and eccentricity of human nature, as in the nobilities and beauties of life. The pleasant little moral with which the play closes—where Biron is told to make his jokes in a hospital for one year and cause the poor sufferers to laugh, and then, when the sting is gone from his humor, he may hope to win Rosaline's hand—is characteristic of the slight ethical interest of the play.

The same mood is in all the early comedies, while the one tragedy of the period, even though rewritten later on, is closely akin. In

Romeo and Juliet the love is wholly on the plane of the senses, with the fresh awakening of youth. Juliet, with all her charm, is still an adolescent heroine. Suddenly, among these dramas, appears one, called a comedy, but which involves deeply tragic elements, with a hero who outgrows his plot and setting; and in *The Merchant of Venice* we think we find Shakespeare's first deep awakening to the ethical problems and laws of life; but an awakening not yet complete. Unique among the greater dramas of Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* closes with its ethical tendencies unfinished. We see Shylock grow from what we thought was to be a caricature of the Jew, into a great many-sided character, with all the nobility and baseness of human nature in him. It was right that he should be balked of his revenge; but what of the humanity that sobbed for the ring that Jessica bartered for a monkey in a night's debauch? That remains unfulfilled. It was right that Antonio should be freed and Portia and Bassanio happy; but what of the mean Jew-baiting on the part of those who reach up and take a name that does not belong to them—the name of Christ? That

remains all unpunished. Shakespeare himself seems to have felt this; for the play really ends at the close of the fourth act, where Shylock, bowed and broken, balked of the one passion into which persecution had turned his humanity, goes out alone into the night; while the "Christians," who have beautifully preached mercy and callously performed the opposite, go merrily home to Belmont. To stop there would be too bitter; and so Shakespeare has added the beautiful anticlimax of the fifth act, where the moonlight sleeps upon the bank, music sounds out its calming charm and we share the happy reunion of the wedded lovers.

Passing over the history plays, in which Shakespeare not only expressed his patriotism but studied the vices and perfidies of courts and kings, we find him, at thirty-five, turning aside to rest himself and us with that lovely poetic interlude, which well deserves its name because in it everything goes—*As You Like It.* Here Shakespeare turns from the big but marred life of human society to the sincere reality of Nature with the expression of simple human instincts on this background. With

all its charm, however, a strain of pessimism runs through *As You Like It.* It shows in the half-humorous cynicism of Jaques, in the mood of reaction on the world in other characters. Had some shadow fallen across Shakespeare's inner life, fitting him to deal with the darker problems of his great tragedies? If so, his reaction was still youthful. While the characters of *As You Like It* talk finely about "the sweet uses of adversity," like most of the world, they abandon those sweet uses at the earliest opportunity; and as they return at the end of the play to the larger life of the world again, so Shakespeare makes his return in that unrivaled series of great tragedies marking the middle period of his creative life.

How great the development of his mind and spirit evidenced in these! Grappling with the relation of men to the world-forces that struggle in the arena of time in *Julius Cæsar,* facing the deepest mystery of personality in *Hamlet,* portraying the destructive sweep of fierce passions in *Othello, Lear* and *Macbeth,* unleashing the great biological energies of man in *Antony and Cleopatra,* with the world as the stake for which they contend—there is no

deep Shakespeare fails to sound, no conflict he does not seem to understand.

He did not stop here. The late plays we call romances, since they include tragedy and comedy in one. They end happily, but include deeply tragic elements. There is far less use of dramatic power, but a new ethical spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and magnanimity in *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest.* Their mood is one of serene acceptance of life, with light and shadow, pain and joy mingled. When we read through such a fireside story of human life as *The Winter's Tale,* enjoy its fairy-like adventures, respond to its pain, and come in the end to the betrothal of the young lovers and the reunion of the long estranged husband and wife, we can almost see Shakespeare lay down his pen with that sad, grave smile that mingles in one the laughter and tears that with divided sway rule over our common human heart. What a road he had traveled, and how intimately we come to know all the significant phases in the development of his mind and heart, through the succession of the plays!

As a closing illustration of the revelation

of an artist's development through his works, consider for a moment two masterpieces of Michael Angelo, both presenting the same theme—the dead body of Christ in the arms of the Madonna, and coming, the one from near the beginning, the other at the end, of the master's working life.

The first of these is in the chapel on your right hand as you enter *St. Peter's* in Rome. After Michael Angelo had left Florence at the crisis of the struggle between his patrons, the Medici, and the great preacher, Savonarola, who had wakened him, he journeyed about northern Italy and thence to Rome, where, not long after the execution of Savonarola, he carved this marble group—the Madonna supporting on her splendid knees the dead body of her son. The center of the work is not the dead Christ, but the Madonna, who sustains easily the limp figure across her lap. She is like a Venus de Milo made human and Christian by centuries of suffering. She looks across her dead son beyond and beyond, in restrained, understanding grief, as if she knew that, in spite of the bitter agony of the present, the issue would be

well. There is hope through the gloom of the moment chosen, strong, courageous acceptance of life with all its pain.

Behind the high altar of the Cathedral of Florence stands the other work, found unfinished in Michael Angelo's workshop after his death at the age of nearly eighty-nine. Vasari tells how day after day the master drove his chisel fiercely into the stone, seeking strength, as well as relief from the thoughts that brooded over him. Here the Madonna is not the center, but the limp Christ. He hangs heavily on the arms of his mother, with Mary Magdalen coldly supporting from one side, while Joseph assists in upholding the body from behind. "The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—this Christ is the one who prayed that the cup might pass from him. The hanging figure, with the mood of seeming failure on the worn face and wearied body, wrings our heart-strings with all the weight of tragedy that is human life.

The beginning and the end; between the two lies the career of Michael Angelo: the dreams too vast for the world about him to make attainable; the succession of artistic

tragedies; the plan of a tomb for Julius Second that should outrival the temples of antiquity, the year long labor in the mountains to bring out the marble, the Pope changing his mind, his successors indifferent, the few scattered statues and the shrunken echo in St. Peter's in Chains, the only issue. Another pope, interested in Florence, sends Michael Angelo into the papal quarries to bring marble for the façade of San Lorenzo. Months of quarrying and road-building follow; while a marble block on the square before San Lorenzo and a few others beside the sea are the only evidence of the gigantic labors, and San Lorenzo remains without its façade to-day. Then the days of building fortifications to protect Florence from Medicean enemies, with nights of "working stealthily" at the figures to adorn the Medicean tombs: it is all here—the whole life-history of Michael Angelo—in those two masterpieces that bound his creative life.

"At a distance we only hear of the first artists, and then we are often contented with names only; but when we draw nearer to this starry sky, and the luminaries of the second and third magnitude also begin to twinkle, each one coming forward and occupying his proper place in the whole constellation, then the world becomes wide, and art becomes rich."—Goethe, *Travels in Italy*, p. 36.

"Art has to leave reality, it has to raise itself boldly above necessity and neediness; for art is the daughter of freedom, and it requires its prescriptions and rules to be furnished by the necessity of spirits and not by that of matter. But in our day it is necessity, neediness, that prevails, and bends a degraded humanity under its iron yoke. *Utility* is the great idol of the time, to which all powers do homage and all subjects are subservient. In this great balance of utility, the spiritual service of art has no weight, and, deprived of all encouragement, it vanishes from the noisy Vanity Fair of our time. The very spirit of philosophical inquiry itself robs the imagination of one promise after another, and the frontiers of art are narrowed, in proportion as the limits of science are enlarged."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, pp. 27, 28.

CHAPTER VI

DEFINING FORCES BEHIND ART: THE EPOCH

WE have seen how art and the personality of the artist explain each other in the changing aspects of a man's development. That personality, however, which is always a molding force behind art, is itself in part the expression of still deeper causes. Every artist is in some measure always the embodiment of an epoch, of that *Zeitgeist* or time spirit that tends to express itself in every aspect of his character and attitude.

The spirit of the epoch is, it is true, a complex of many forces. Nature and life know nothing of our dates and periods. History is a ceaselessly onflowing stream, with ebb and flow in its tides, but with nothing of that sharp demarcation of period from period that we have made. We put signposts into the long road of the past, saying, for example, "Go to,

let us regard the crowning epoch of the renaissance as dating from 1450 to 1525." As a matter of fact the forces molding it began under the surface afar back in the middle ages, and are still active to-day. Such divisions are always to some extent arbitrary; yet it is wise to make them, since they help us to understand the past and the great movements which are undoubtedly present in it.

That we may legitimately mark off epochs is due first of all to that law of rhythm, which Spencer holds as applying not only to all life, but to the inorganic world—to the formation of a crystal and the development of a solar system; and which certainly is evident in all the growth of man whether as individual or race. Movements of action and reaction, of growth and incubation, everywhere succeed each other. Every force, moreover, has a life-history, not unlike that of a man. It is born, it grows through youth to maturity, it declines, and may utterly die out. Thus the life-history of the dominant forces determines the rise and decline of the epoch which they characterize.

These primal causes are further complicated by the changes occurring within the life of a

people and the streams of foreign influence entering it from without. Consider how the Wars of the Roses in England, or the religious wars in Germany, following the reformation, affected the lives of those peoples and determined the characteristics of certain epochs. Note, further, how the period at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century in France was determined by the terrible explosion of pent-up forces in the revolution. As examples of foreign influence in molding a period, consider the effect of Greece upon Italy in the renaissance, of Italy upon England in the Elizabethan age, and of French political idealism and German literature and philosophy upon the nineteenth century in England and America.

From the combination of these varied forces results the time-spirit. With reference to art there are two main types of epoch that should be recognized. There are periods when the energies of life are creative and productive, and periods when they are quiescent. Thus the contrasting types are: epochs of preparation and of production, of doubt and faith, of criticism and creation. As it is much easier to

believe during an epoch of faith than in one of doubt, so it is easier to produce in a time of creation than in one of criticism. No artist ever escapes the influence of the time-spirit. Even when he reacts against it, he shows that it is there, and proves its influence by his protest.

Thus an artist may sustain either of two contrasting relations to his age. He may express it positively or negatively, by embodying the dominant forces of the time or strongly reacting against them. Thus the spirituality of Emerson's philosophy is accentuated by his reaction upon the dominant materialism of American life. So the very sensuousness of the Italy of Fra Angelico shows by opposition in the exalted spiritual quality of his paintings. On the other hand, Leonardo da Vinci embodies affirmatively all that was most significant in the renaissance; he is strong where it was strong, limited just where its strength ceases. So Dante represents the middle age, or Goethe, the spirit of modern culture. Michael Angelo, like Leonardo, embodies many of the dominant characteristics of the renaissance; but, in contrast to Leonardo, he is in profound

reaction against other tendencies, towering above his epoch, reaching back into the middle age and protesting with Dantesque earnestness against certain tendencies of the world about him.

Thus there may be any combination of positive and negative elements in the relation of artist to epoch; but always the influence of the age is present. Other things being equal, the artist naturally can rise to a greater achievement when he is in positive harmony with the great forces of his age, especially if it is a broadly creative time; but, by expression or protest, the influence of the epoch is always evident in his work. As Emerson suggests, it is as if the hand of the artist were clutched by a gigantic hand which drives the pen across the page, the brush over the canvas or the chisel into the marble.*

* "No man can quite exclude the element of Necessity from his labor. No man can quite emancipate himself from his age and country, or produce a model in which the education, the religion, the politics, usages and arts of his time shall have no share. Though he were never so original, never so wilful and fantastic, he cannot wipe out of his work every trace of the thoughts amidst which it grew. The very avoidance betrays the usage he avoids. Above his will and out of his sight he is necessitated by the air he breathes and the idea on which he and his contemporaries live and toil, to

Even when the artist is quite unconscious of revealing the epoch he does so none the less. The sculptors of the gigantic, earth-bound statues of Egypt, with the conventional features and unseparated limbs, did not know that they were expressing the millenniums of Egyptian tyranny; but they were. The Greek artists who carved those calm human gods, with living forms and features, vast size replaced by the greater impressiveness of truth to nature and to the ideal, were unaware that their works revealed the intense individualism and fine humanity of the Greek spirit; but we read the revelation. The Elizabethan dramatists did not think of their plays as expressing the new, fresh interest in human life, the adventurous spirit, the enthusiastic response to every phase of manhood and womanhood; but we find these characteristics of the age in all their productions.

With our own epoch it is more difficult to

share the manner of his times, without knowing what that manner is. Now that which is inevitable in the work has a higher charm than individual talent can ever give, inasmuch as the artist's pen or chisel seems to have been held and guided by a gigantic hand to inscribe a line in the history of the human race."—Emerson, *Essay on Art.*

see the expressions of the time-spirit, because we are within it; yet here, too, certain big tendencies can be perceived. For instance, in all our painting are two predominant motives. The major one is humanity. We have discovered the dignity and romance of common life, and we share increasingly in the social idealism that is the hope of our age. Thus the dominant motive in our sculpture and painting is the portrayal of common life. Two worn peasants shivering together in the cold; the sailor on the sinking boat; the humble father in shirt-sleeves at the breakfast-table, looking pensively across at the vacant chair, while his children eat merrily about him, unconscious of their loss and his grief; the mother, fallen asleep at the task of peeling potatoes, her baby looking wonderingly up into the death-still face; the shepherd in tattered cloak and wooden shoes, the look of dumb hunger in his face, returning at evening with his flock, with the wide expanse of the desolate moorland stretching away: these are the subjects of the statues and paintings that fill the modern galleries; before which people stand and to which they return, unconsciously

responding to the perhaps unconscious expression of the modern spirit.

On the other hand, the minor motive in our painting is the representation of Nature in landscape work. From the rush and intense action of our lives we turn to the peace and beauty of Nature and find relief on her breast; and landscape painting springs into being in answer to this need of our age.

As the art is molded and explained by the epoch, so the epoch in turn is interpreted by the art. Thus it is possible, as with the individual, to trace the life-history of the age through the art embodying its different phases. Since every productive epoch tends to pass through the life-history of a person, its progress may be represented by some modification of a half-circle. The rise may be rapid and the decline slow and long continued, or the rise may be slow and irregular and the drop sudden; but some modification of a half-circle will chart every period of art in the history of the world.

The interesting point is that the men on the rising slope are nearer to the vital inspirations of the age, their art is significant in

content, they have much to say, but are as yet imperfectly masters of the vehicle of expression. The men on the declining slope, on the contrary, are further and further from the great forces of the epoch, they have less and less to say, but show increasing mastery of form in refinement and beauty, until the end comes in over-refinement and academic formalism, with significance gone. Thus the first half of a creative epoch is characteristically "romantic," with a less restrained outpouring of emotion and imagination; the second half is dominantly "classical," with increasing obedience to the established rules and conventions of expression. Normally, just at the top can there be the perfect balance between content and form, significance and beauty; and there are found the great masters, the Shakespeares and Leonardos in all epochs of art.

For example, in the early Elizabethan age we have the vigorous outpouring of thought and emotion with imperfect dramatic form, the unrestrained horrors of the tragedies of blood and the extravagances of Euphuism, rising to the splendid power of Marlowe with

his "mighty line." On the declining slope we find the feminine delicacy of Beaumont and Fletcher, the academic formalism of the late masters, passing over into the vacuous amenities of the singers at the court of Charles I, who wrote charming lyrics in praise of their mistress's eyebrow or the mole on the back of her neck—past masters in the art of saying nothing exquisitely. Just at the top is Shakespeare, his working life centering almost exactly at the middle of the half-circle that charts the age. He was born just right, so that his genius could reach full expression as the supreme incarnation of the age. Do not misunderstand me: a great man will be great in any age; but if Shakespeare had been born twenty-five years earlier or later, his work would have been widely different, and our conception of Elizabethan literature would not be what it is to-day.

A similar life-history is evident in Italian painting of the great days. Beginning with the deeply sincere but quaintly faulty work of those painters of the dawn, Cimabue, Giotto and their fellows, rising through the work of painters of deep inspiration and

significant content, but still imperfect expression, such as Fra Angelico, Fra Lippo Lippi and Botticelli, the climax comes in the balanced masterpieces of the great triumvirate, Raphael, Leonardo and Michael Angelo. Thence we descend, through the faultless figures of slight meaning from the goldsmith-sculptor, Benvenuto Cellini, and the flaming colors, with little significance, of Guido Reni, to the sweet nothings of Carlo Dolci and the academic trivialities that followed.

When a great man is born in an unfortunate epoch, his work will show the hampering influences, but true genius will make possible high achievement nevertheless. Milton, for example, while not reaching the absolute height of Shakespeare, rises far higher above his less creative age than does Shakespeare above his Elizabethan contemporaries. So Michael Angelo, maturing in the supreme period of Italian art, but outliving two generations of artists and working far on into the period of decline, by sheer force of character and genius, continued, in the face of lack of adequate appreciation and support, to produce masterpieces to the end. Thus varied may

be the relations of artists to the epochs in which they live and work; but always in some form the influence of the age is stamped on the artists' work, and always the art in some measure reveals the spirit of the age.

"The most profound erudition is no more akin to genius than a collection of dried plants is like Nature, with its constant flow of new life, ever fresh, ever young, ever changing. There are no two things more opposed than the childish naïvety of an ancient author and the learning of his commentator."—Schopenhauer, *The Art of Literature*, p. 52.

"One should not study contemporaries and competitors, but the great men of antiquity, whose works have, for centuries, received equal homage and consideration. Indeed, a man of really superior endowments will feel the necessity of this, and it is just this need for an intercourse with great predecessors, which is the sign of a higher talent. Let us study Molière, let us study Shakespeare, but above all things, the old Greeks, and always the Greeks."—Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann and Soret*, p. 236.

"Ah!—if you would and could but hear and see our *true* Freischütz,—you might feel the anxiety that now oppresses me, in the form of a friendly appreciation on your own part of the peculiarity of that spiritual life, which belongs to the German nation as a birthright; you would look kindly upon the silent attraction that draws the German away from the life of his large cities,—wretched and clumsily imitative of foreign influences, as it is,—and takes him back to nature; attracts him to the solitude of the forests, that he may there re-awaken those emotions for which your language has not even a word,—but which those mystic, clear tones of our Weber explain to us as thoroughly as your exquisite decorations and enervating music must make them lifeless and irrecognizable for you."—Wagner, in "Der Freischütz in Paris," *Art Life and Theories*, pp. 106, 107.

CHAPTER VII

DEFINING FORCES BEHIND ART: THE RACE

THE spirit of the age is contained, after all, in something larger than itself. Epochs are but moments in the life of the *race*. There is a deep, organic basis in the life of a people which, once established, shows in its every expression. We have seen how a racial character is gradually developed under the joint influence of environment and the actions of men. The type, once evolved, is perpetuated by both direct and social heredity, with progressive modifications as time goes on. Thus, as the epoch is behind the individual artist, so the race is beneath the epoch as the deeper and more abiding cause, molding every phase of the art produced.

Compare again the two lyrics studied from Tennyson and Browning in Chapter IV.

We saw how strikingly the two poems contrasted in both thought and art, thus revealing impressively the differences in character and experience between the two men. Both poems are, however, introspective personal confessions, alike showing the modern interest in the spiritual life; while, further, both contain the deep English seriousness in facing the problems of life and death, the Anglo-Saxon gravity in the presence of the moral mysteries of life. Thus in both, in spite of the wide contrast between them, is the expression of the common characteristics of the age and the race to which the two artists alike belonged.

Every expression in art is thus in some measure revelatory of the race and to be explained in part by the race. Compare, for example, the Dutch and Italian schools of painting. There was some cross influence between them, particularly of the Italian upon the Dutch; yet who could ever mistake a work of the northern school for one of the south? The Dutch character is as clearly expressed in the soft and somber brown tones of their paintings as in the

prosaic treatment of religious subjects or the whimsical studies of common life; while the sensuous wealth of flaming color in Italian art is as characteristic as the reach of religious mysticism.

How impressively the religious conviction of the Mohammedans finds expression in the absence of sculpture and figure painting, and in the invention and complication of arabesque adornment in their vast mosques. Compare such Semitic art with the living sculpture of the Nature-worshiping Greeks, and the fundamental opposition of the two great races is evident.

Greek words are usually musical, Anglo-Saxon harsh, and the different genius of the two peoples is expressed even in the bony structure of the language. The Greeks could say:

«Παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης.»*

The best we can do is "along the shore of the many-sounding sea"; and then we depend for the most musical word upon our Latin inheritance. Lowell indicated this contrast in dis-

* *Iliad,* book I, line 34.

cussing the Latin and Anglo-Saxon elements of our English, with reference especially to Wordsworth's theory and practice. He says: "Should we translate the title of Wordsworth's famous Ode, *'Intimations of Immortality,' 'Hints on Deathlessness'* it would have hissed like an angry gander," *—as indeed it would. In other words, the musical quality in English comes largely through the Norman French, from our classical inheritance.

Thus in Homer are the long, carefully worked out similes and the roll of sounding hexameters, while *Beowulf* pours out its wild wealth of metaphor with irregular rhythm and harsh alliteration. Greek poetry, as we have seen, is time-measured almost as accurately as music, while English poetry depends more upon the melodic principle of accent. The result is we can scarcely read Greek poetry aright, try as we may; yet even in our reading, what liquid music there is in such stanzas as those of Sappho's *Ode to Aphrodite:*

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, volume III, *Shakespeare Once More*, p. 13. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1891.

«Ποικιλόθρον', ἀθάνατ' Ἀφρόδιτα,
παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε
μή μ' ἄσαισι μήτ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
Πότνια, θῦμον.»

The limpid harmony of such a stanza is no more a tribute to the Lesbian poetess than to the Hellenic race from which she sprang.

Even the record of a nation's crisis may thus be recorded in the fabric of the language. For example, Dean Trench,* quoting the jester in *Ivanhoe,* pointed out, early in the development of modern philology, that in English the names of the domestic animals —cow, steer, calf, ox, pig, swine, sheep—are all Anglo-Saxon in origin; while the names of the prepared meats—beef, pork, mutton, veal—are Norman French. Why? The answer is significant: when the language was in its formative period the Anglo-Saxon mass of conquered population took care of the domestic animals, as cowherds, swineherds, shepherds; while the Norman French conquerors *ate the prepared meats.* Thus even the very stuff the art of literature uses in-

* Supplée's *Trench on Words,* p. 156. A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, 1887.

carnates in itself the life of the race. How much more, then, must art express the fundamental and constant aspects of the race. As with the epoch, the artist may be quite unconscious that he is embodying them; but they are there, nevertheless, as the basis of his own character and thought, from which he cannot escape.

This molding of art by the characteristics of the race is so true that one fine art often comes to represent, beyond all others, a particular people. Thus with the Greeks, sculpture was the characteristic fine art, lending its laws to all other expressions of the race. The most limited of the fine arts, but most adequate within its limits, sculpture exactly answered the Greek individualizing and form-loving spirit, and thus came to regulate the other arts. Painting dealt chiefly with human figures with little background. Architecture was statuesque in simplicity, restraint and harmony. Greek tragedy dealt with ethical types, rather than individuals; while even philosophy obeyed the laws of sculpture in the balanced harmony of the Platonic dialogue and Aristotelian analysis.

Italy, on the other hand, with a warmer sensuousness and love of color, and a wealth of fancy transfiguring the prosaic detail of life with imaginative illusions, found her representative expression in painting. The deep, vague dreams and emotions of more somberly imaginative Germany found a natural voice in music; while Anglo-Saxon England, practical and utilitarian, strong in moral interest and responding to every type of character and action, reached her highest expression in art in the drama of the Elizabethan age, exhibiting man in action and relation on the stage of time.

Obviously these racial tendencies overlap, while every race needs many expressions. Italy produced great sculpture and poetry, Greece a marvelous drama, Germany has her schools of painting. Now one, now another art may voice the same people; yet the differences of race are sufficiently strong frequently to make one art definitive of a nation's life.

As with the epoch and artist, so with the race, it is possible to trace the unfolding development through the succession of works

of art. The life of a race is like an on-flowing stream, with rise and fall, becoming deeper and more complex as it flows on. Epochs are made naturally by the rise and fall of its tide, with the influx of foreign waters. Let it be emphasized, however, that it is *one stream* that flows on, rising to expression through artists and epochs. Thus that which is basal in the race is present from the beginning to the end.

In all English literature, for example, as in all other expressions of English genius, is a common spirit, difficult to define because generic, but everywhere vaguely or clearly present. Perhaps its most characteristic feature is that grave Anglo-Saxon moral earnestness in the presence of the mystery of life, of which I have already spoken. Taine quotes one of its earliest recorded expressions in the speech of one of the Anglo-Saxon chieftains gathered to listen to the first Christian missionaries to the island. After these had spoken, the chieftain rose and said:

"You remember, it may be, O king, that which sometimes happens in winter when you are seated

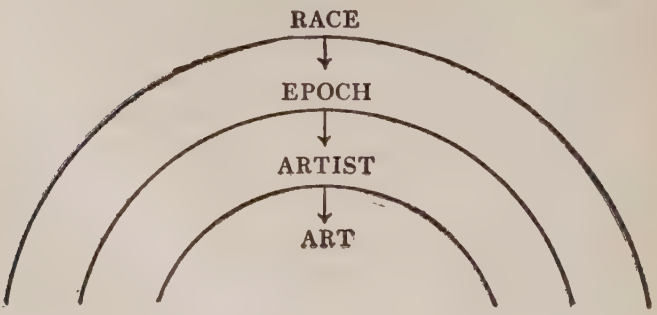
at table with your earls and thanes. Your fire is lighted, and your hall warmed, and without is rain and snow and storm. Then comes a swallow flying across the hall; he enters by one door, and leaves by another. The brief moment while he is within is pleasant to him; he feels not rain nor cheerless winter weather; but the moment is brief—the bird flies away in the twinkling of an eye, and he passes from winter to winter. Such, methinks, is the life of man on earth, compared with the uncertain time beyond. It appears for a while; but what is the time which comes after—the time which was before? We know not. If, then, this new doctrine may teach us somewhat of greater certainty, it were well that we should regard it." *

That is the English view of life. It is in the dying words of *Beowulf,* the poem of Langland, the sonnets of Sidney and Spenser, the soliloquies of Hamlet, the essays of Bacon, as it is in Tennyson's *Passing of Arthur* and Browning's *Epilogue to Asolando.* It is in all these, and how many other expressions of the race, because it is the

* Taine, *History of English Literature,* translated by Van Laun, book I, chapter I, section VI. Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1886.

fundamental spirit of the race throughout its development.

Thus there are three great definitive causes behind art—the race, the epoch and the artist—all three finding expression in every masterpiece and uniting to mold its characteristics in content and form. Of these the most fundamental and generic is the race; more definite and specific, but still molding broad aspects of art is the epoch; while most definite and clear in influencing every detail of a masterpiece is the personality and experience of the artist. The more generic and fundamental causes act behind and through the more specific. Their relation may be represented as follows:



Thus a work of art is like a wondrous shell thrown up on the shore of Time by the ocean of Humanity. We hold it to our ear and hear, clear and strong, the music of the artist's life and character; deeper and fainter, but still definite in melody, is the sound of the epoch's spirit; while graver and sonorous, but still more vague and dim, is the deep undertone of the race.

"The eye, which is called the window of the soul, is the chief means whereby the understanding may most fully and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature; and the ear is the second inasmuch as it acquires its importance from the fact that it hears the things which the eye has seen. If you historians, or poets, or mathematicians had never seen things with your eyes you would be ill able to describe them in your writings. And if you, O poet, represent a story by depicting it with your pen, the painter with his brush will so render it as to be more easily satisfying and less tedious to understand. If you call painting 'dumb poetry,' then the painter may say of the poet that his art is 'blind painting.' Consider then which is the more grievous affliction, to be blind or be dumb! Although the poet has as wide a choice of subjects as the painter, his creations fail to afford as much satisfaction to mankind as do paintings, for while poetry attempts with words to represent forms, actions, and scenes, the painter employs the exact images of the forms in order to reproduce these forms. Consider, then, which is more fundamental to man, the name of man or his image? The name changes with change of country; the form is unchanged except by death."—Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci's Note-Books*, arranged by Edward McCurdy, pp. 156, 157.

"It seems as though purely human feeling, grown stronger by its very repression on the side of conventional civilization, had sought out a means of bringing into use some laws of language peculiar to itself, by means of which it could express itself intelligibly, freed from the trammels of logical rules of thought. The extraordinary popularity of music in our age, the ever-increasing participation (extending through all classes of society) in the production of music of the deepest character, the growing desire to make of musical culture a necessary part of every education,—all these things which are certainly obvious and undeniable, distinctly prove the justice of the assumption that a deep-rooted and earnest need of humanity finds expression in modern musical development; and that music, unintelligible as its language is when tried by the laws of logic, must bear within it a more convincing means of making itself understood, than even those laws contain."—Wagner, in "The Music of the Future," *Art Life and Theories*, p. 159.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNIQUE FUNCTION OF EACH FINE ART

WE have now come to the heart of our study—the effort to define the specific function of each of the fine arts. That each has a distinctive appeal is evident merely in our varying appreciation of them. With most persons, some one art is apt to have a meaning beyond all the others, thus indicating a harmony between the gifts of the student and the specific function of the art preferred. Thus, also, it is rare to find an artist, practising one art, adequately appreciating the others. This is due to the fact that he sees his own art from within, thus realizing its power and scope; while the others he views from without, and thus is apt to see their limitations. Thus the sculptor recognizes the power in his art to appeal directly to the vision, and through the vision to the mind, while he sees how much less

effective music or poetry must be in the same field. The musician, as in Browning's *Abt Vogler,* shows the miracle of his own art, and points the limitations of painting and poetry in contrast.

This tendency is unfortunate, for there is nothing else, except experience, an artist needs so much as to saturate himself in the material of arts other than his own. Otherwise he cannot have breadth of appreciation and the ever-growing grasp of the content of the human spirit, necessary to great creation in any art, and is apt to degenerate into the mere technician or trickster. Every artist must be a man first and an artist afterward, to do great work; and this deep drinking from the fountain sources of other arts helps powerfully to keep him human.

Similarly the student, even though one art appeals supremely to him, needs to respond to them all to attain balanced culture and a full appreciation of the expression of the human spirit. It takes all the arts and all combinations of them to express adequately the life of man. Thus we need to see as clearly as possible the function of each of

these arts in relation to the life of man, and to that end must answer three questions:

1. What of the whole content of the human spirit finds expression in the particular art?

2. How and by what means does the specific art accomplish its end?

3. What are its limitations? In other words, where does it terminate? A limitation is always the point at which a power ceases. Thus there is no value in attempting to solve the third question until the other two have been answered. Negative criticism is never of value except *after* positive appreciation. These are the questions we shall ask, and attempt to answer as thoroughly as possible, in reference to each of the arts under consideration.

That each art has a unique function is proved further by the mere fact of its permanent cultivation across the centuries. If one art could accomplish more easily and effectively all that is done by another, the second art would tend to disappear, or to be cultivated only for the sake of novelty. Indeed, history has seen the rise and practical

disappearance of certain arts, once dominant expressions of the spirit.

The art of mosaic work is an admirable example; for in the fifth and sixth centuries it was the main art in which Christian thought found expression. Go to Ravenna, stagnant among its marshes, and visit first the tomb—first cruciform structure in the world, built in the second quarter of the fifth century—of Galla Placidia, that wonderful woman, daughter of one emperor, sister of another and mother of a third, who, after a life of wildest romance, ruled the western world for a quarter of a century. The little building is sunk far below the modern level of the city. You enter and are taken into another world. All round about are wonderful mosaics almost perfectly preserved, the colors as warm and true as when they were placed upon the walls. On a background of soft, deep blue —like some old Persian tapestry—stand out the stately figures of Christian story, like Greek or Roman gods. There, is a young Apollo of a Christ with the apostles as sheep gathered about him; here, the grouped disciples with doves drinking at their feet.

Go to the old court church of Theodoric, either side of the noble basilica as well as the end wall covered with mosaics from the sixth century. Down the long nave walls march forever two stately processions of Christian martyrs to their doom and reward. Above, ruder but vigorously expressive scenes, of Theodoric's time, depict with childlike freshness various aspects of the Christian story.

One finds the wealth of mosaic everywhere in Ravenna: in San Vitale, "beautiful as an oriental dream," in the baptistry of the Arians and that of the orthodox, in the great church at the port of Classis—all warmer and more permanent in color, graver and more majestic in spirit, than are perhaps the decorations of any other series of temples in the world.

Why, then, has mosaic work sunk to the position of an art cultivated chiefly for purposes of novelty and adornment? The reason is that, excepting the greater permanence of its colors (noted by Ruskin) and the archaic gravity of its religious impressiveness—determined by the very limitations under which the artist labors—all that mosaic can accom-

plish, as an expressive art, can be done far more easily and effectively by painting. To represent a scene by laboriously piecing together bits of colored glass or stone is a process so painfully difficult, as compared to the free work of brush and colors on wall or canvas, that mosaic work has inevitably lost the position it once held as an independent and, indeed, leading fine art.

Almost identical has been the history of true fresco painting. Every student of Italian painting knows that, from the beginning of the great epoch through the major portion of it, the masters did much of their best work in true fresco, which meant putting the colors on the wall while the plaster was wet. They did, it is true, at times retouch, "*a secco*"—in dry; but they disliked to use this device because the colors were less permanent than those put on the wet wall. Thus the fresco painter submitted to severe limitations, and what he accomplished within them fills us with amazement. By studying the lines in the plaster we are able to discover how much he achieved in a day. There are spaces of wall, six by four or more feet, painted in a

single day by such masters as Andrea del Sarto and Michael Angelo, and never touched again. Marvelous genius, but what a forbidding situation! The modern master is disinclined to submit to it. He would rather paint on canvas, among the conveniences of his studio, where the lights can be arranged as he chooses and where he can work at his leisure, retouching as he pleases, and then have the finished work attached to the wall it is to decorate. Thus made, it can, moreover, be easily removed if the building is altered or torn down, and the greater permanence of the work is thus assured. If the artist does paint directly upon the wall, he is apt to choose one of the various methods of painting, at greater leisure, on the dry plaster. True fresco painting has thus tended to disappear as an independent fine art, since practically all that it accomplished can be done more easily and effectively by other methods.

In contrast to these arts, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Poetry last. They have been cultivated across all these long centuries, and promise to endure while man cares for beauty. The position they respectively hold may vary

widely. Certain of them do not occupy today the place once held as dominant expressions of some past civilization. Nevertheless, they all are evidently permanently necessary to the complete expression of the human spirit. This fact alone proves that each of them has some distinctive function, not fulfilled by any other art, in this task of expressing and interpreting the common basis of human life; and what that specific function is, in each instance, it is now our task to discover.

"It is neither charm nor is it dignity which speaks from the glorious face of the Juno Ludovici; it is neither of these, for it is both at once. While the female god challenges our veneration, the godlike woman at the same time kindles our love. But while in ecstacy we give ourselves up to the heavenly beauty, the heavenly self-repose awes us back. The whole form rests and dwells in itself—a fully complete creation in itself—and as if she were out of space, without advance or resistance; it shows no force contending with force, no opening through which time could break in. Irresistibly carried away and attracted by her womanly charm, kept off at a distance by her godly dignity, we also find ourselves at length in the state of the greatest repose, and the result is a wonderful impression, for which the understanding has no idea and language no name."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 72.

"As practising myself the art of sculpture no less than that of painting, and doing both the one and the other in the same degree, it seems to me that without suspicion of unfairness I may venture to give an opinion as to which of the two is the more intellectual, and of the greater difficulty and perfection. In the first place sculpture is dependent on certain lights, namely those from above, while a picture carries everywhere with it its own light and shade; light and shade therefore are essential to sculpture. In this respect the sculptor is aided by the nature of the relief which produces these of its own accord, but the painter artificially creates them by his art in places where nature would normally do the like. The sculptor cannot render the difference in the varying natures of the colors of objects; painting does not fail to do so in any particular. The lines of perspective of sculptors do not seem in any way true; those of painters may appear to extend a hundred miles beyond the work itself."—Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci's Note-Books*, arranged by Edward McCurdy, pp. 160, 161.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF SCULPTURE

WE shall take sculpture first, in the effort to show the function of each of the arts, because it is the most severely limited of them all, and therefore most satisfying within its limits. Let us study a few characteristic works, choosing well-known and almost hackneyed examples, that the reader may easily call them up before his own imagination, and ask what they do to him and how they accomplish their end.

Let us take first one of the best-known and most widely copied of all statues—the *Venus de Milo.* When you make your way down the long corridor of the Louvre to the small room at the end, and stand for the first time before the *Venus de Milo,* seen against the dark hangings of the room, your initial impression is one of sensuous pleasure

in the beauty of the forms before you, enhanced by the mellow color of the millennium-old marble. The harmony of the lines of the figure, the noble pose, the poise of the small head upon the curved neck, the beauty of the face, the soft color of the stone—all unite in creating an impression of sensuous joy. Let me say here, this sensuous pleasure is enough. It justifies the work, and is in itself worth while, if we go no further. We do not stop here, however. Through the vision of the forms, is borne in upon the mind the conception of noble womanhood. The *Venus de Milo* is not a woman, but *woman*—not the copy of a particular woman, but what all Greek women aspired to be. Balanced, harmonious, nothing too much—not too much physical development, not too much mental or spiritual development, every element in harmonious relation to all others—the *Venus de Milo* is divine because she is so perfectly human.

Beyond the sensuous pleasure and the definite conception, the student experiences a deeper æsthetic joy in the perfect harmony between idea and execution. The way the

conception flows forth into the living stone, the perfect marriage of thought with form, gives a pleasure deeper than sensuous, of the mind and spirit.

The conception of womanhood is given through forms copied directly from nature. There is a satisfying reality in them. You can go about the statue, or turn it upon its base; from every point of view there is the same satisfaction from the complete realization of form for the physical vision. These forms, moreover, are represented together in a single moment of time. The sculptor, presenting forms in space relation, is always limited to the representation of one moment; and the pose, here wisely chosen, is not overstrained, so that the eye rests in it without distress.

The forms are not merely copied from nature, however, but are exalted in the imitation. This is the face and body of every woman, and yet of no woman. It is everywhere in the world, yet lifted above life with an element of idealism.

So far we can all go together. The sensuous pleasure, the definite conception, the æs-

thetic joy are universal, being given for all appreciative beholders, through forms copied and idealized from nature, and presented with complete realization in a single moment of time. What of the deeper emotions we experience in the presence of this statue? Ah, here we are on debatable ground. The answer must be purely personal. It is true that, beyond the sensuous and æsthetic joy, the calm dignity of the statue, with the appeal of the soft, mellow color of the marble, may tend to inspire a generic mood in the beholder; but aside from this, one's emotions depend upon what one brings. I can but state my own, recognizing that they are wholly personal. Each time I have stood before the *Venus de Milo* I have experienced a certain joyous exultation that men did once rise to this conception of glorious womanhood and were able to embody it, if only in the form of ideal art. Then, as my thought has gone back to the old Greek world, I have felt an almost sad hunger for its sunny youth, its adequate realization of ideals, attainable because limited, in striking contrast to the feverish restlessness of our deeper life. I

must recognize, however, that these feelings result from my own convictions and experience, and that others may see the statue with equal sincerity and quite different emotions. I know thoughtful persons who have confessed to a feeling of mere repugnance in the presence of the statue, caused by the different proportions of the figure from the type of woman's body conventionally admired to-day. In other words, the same conception, given in the statue, carried a different range of emotions, depending upon the taste, belief and associations they brought to it. Is it not clear, then, that in this work of sculpture the sensuous appeal, the conception and the æsthetic pleasure are given, and, in proportion to the measure of appreciation, are the same for all; while the emotional response is brought by the beholder and associated with the conception, depending upon his character, experience and training?

Near the center of the long corridor dedicated to the Elgin marbles in the British Museum, reposes the group of three goddesses, perhaps the most glorious surviving example of Phidian art. Headless, muti-

lated, they are still instinct with life. As a scientist, from the bone of some prehistoric animal, can reconstruct in imagination the creature as it was, so the broken fragment of a Greek masterpiece—a mere headless and limbless torso—carries all the mystery of life, and the beholder can see in imagination the work as it left the creator's hand. So with these goddesses. The fluid, yet settled drapery reveals rather than conceals the splendid limbs. The figures are strong, majestic, not showing the exaggerated voluptuousness of Michael Angelo's female figures on the Medicean tombs, yet without the feminine softness of the later Praxitilean art, but with the grave, exalted beauty fitting to the gods. As always in sculpture, the work is limited to the representation of a single moment of time, yet the moment chosen has the sense of eternity. They repose there forever, calmly viewing the Panathenaic procession as it winds its eternal way up the Acropolis hill.

Sculpture must plan for the environment of its figures; thus these forms, while completely realized, are grouped to be seen from in front

and below, placed against the temple and under the radiant sky. One responds with sensuous joy to the beauty of line and form, the harmony of the grouping, the play of light and shadow, and the warm color of the stone. More deeply, one realizes the conception of the three goddess types, grouped in the dramatic moment, with the æsthetic pleasure in the harmony of idea and execution.

Beyond this satisfaction, what does one feel? Again the answer must be personal. My own first feeling was one of sadness that these marbles must be here in the solemn museum, amid the smoke and fog of London, instead of on the dazzling temple crowning the Acropolis hill, in the transparent air, under the blue of the sky, with the bluer sea and still bluer islands beyond. Then I have experienced an immeasurable lift of the spirit as I have been carried back to the great days of Athens, to the splendid heroism of the Persian wars, the memories of Marathon and Salamis, the rebuilding of the city, the glories of the brief period of Pericles, when the whole population rose to a splendor of artistic achievement never equaled in the history of

the world. Finally, I have been filled with a kind of homesickness for that old Greek world, where men were glorious children, combining the spontaneity of youth with the wisdom of maturity, when life was undisturbed either by transcendent aspirations or the horror of the abyss of sin, when limited, earthly ideals only were attempted, and realized in forms of beauty that are the despair of subsequent ages. These emotions, however, are not given in the work of art, but depend upon one's own knowledge and associations, and might not be identical in any two students of the same work.

It is true, Greek sculpture made greater use of color than is customary in that art to-day. When modern research forced us to accept the fact that the Greeks, even of the great days, so frequently painted their statues, we did so with great reluctance. It seemed to us impossible that a people so artistically gifted as the Greeks, should have wished to obscure the natural tints of the marble with artificial coloring. Perhaps the changed taste can be explained in the different relation the art of sculpture sustains to

our civilization. Sculpture is by no means the dominant art of our time; its position, indeed, is less prominent than that of painting. We turn to it largely for the peace that comes from the complete representation in form of limited subjects, especially of calm and dignified types. In the field of this art the past overshadows the present. We are accustomed to viewing the old masterpieces in the halls of museums; and the color of the marble, softened by the long centuries, seems singularly appropriate to the antiquity of the work and the flood of memories it awakens. With us, therefore, tinting a statue seems often an unworthy striving for novelty, and easily becomes a somewhat decadent appeal to jaded sensibilities. With the Greeks, on the other hand, sculpture as a dominant art was the major expression of civilization. Much that we expect from painting, the Greeks received from sculpture, and vastly more. Thus the brilliantly painted statues may have been no less in harmony with the active, versatile, dazzling civilization about them, than the mellow-toned, mutilated marbles are with the subdued galleries in which

we have placed them, and the mood of escape from our busy world in which we ponder them.

The element of color has some direct emotional effect, but only in a vague, generic way. With the Greeks, this phase of emotional appeal in sculpture was somewhat stronger than with us. Still, it merely meant life rather than repose, and was wholly subordinate to the conceptions definitely expressed, while the larger range of emotional response, for the ancients as with us, was brought to the work by the observer and associated with the conception there given.

To realize this, stand before the best of the surviving representations of the *Amazon*—that one from the Villa Mattei, now in the Vatican. This type of womanhood is peculiarly attractive to us to-day. Without sacrificing any aspect of feminine grace and beauty, the *Amazon* combines a dignity and independent, self-affirming strength, rare in the ancient Greek ideal of womanhood, but increasingly strong in the aspiration of our time.

The sensuous pleasure in the beauty of this

statue would be even stronger for the ancients than for us, because of their keener artistic sensibilities; so, too, with the joy in the satisfying harmony of ideal and execution. The clear conception of womanhood, at once strong and graceful, independent in character but exquisite in beauty, they would perceive as we do; but I question whether many Greek observers would share at all the emotional response of joyous satisfaction that the majority of modern students would feel in the presence of the statue, because of our aspiration toward the ideal of womanhood revealed in it.

Let us now cross the long centuries to the great period of sculpture that came in Italy, and to its climax in the little chapel erected and adorned by Michael Angelo for the Medicean tombs. You make your way out from the service in *San Lorenzo* to the severe chapel, planned in all its grave lines by the master, its half-light fitting the somber marbles it contains. On one side is the tomb of the younger Lorenzo de' Medici. Above

is the seated figure of the duke in an attitude of sinister meditation, named by the Italians *Il Pensiero.* Below on the tomb are the recumbent figures representing *Twilight* and *Dawn.* The *Twilight,* a masculine figure, left unfinished, probably intentionally, broods in somber meditation. Across from it is the gigantic feminine figure of the *Dawn,* to me the most beautiful of all, almost every detail of the statue exquisitely finished, the splendid voluptuous limbs moving as if in distress, on the sternly beautiful face a look of pain, as if in sorrow at wakening to the agony of another day.

On the other side of the chapel is the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici. The seated statue here represents action, as if about to spring to some vigorous deed, heroic or evil. Below, the two figures represent *Day* and *Night. Day,* again an unfinished masculine form, *Night,* a wonderfully executed feminine one. It was this statue that so moved the contemporaries of Michael Angelo that numerous poems were written regarding it, one of them, by Strozzi, beginning with the stanza:

"La *Notte,* che tu vedi in sì dolci atti
Dormire, fù da un *Angelo* scolpita
In questo sasso; e, perchè dorme, ha vita;
Destala, se no'l credi, e parleratti." *

"This *Night,* whom thou seest slumbering in such a sweet abandon, was sculptured by an *Angel* in this marble; she is alive, although asleep: if thou wilt not believe it, wake her, she will speak."

Michael Angelo responded with the stanza:

"Grato mi è il sonno, e più l'esser di sasso:
Mentre che il danno e la vergogna dura,
Non veder, non sentir m' è gran ventura;
Però non mi destar; deh parla basso!" *

"Sweet is my sleep, but more to be mere stone,
So long as ruin and dishonor reign;
To bear nought, to feel nought, is my great gain;
Then wake me not, speak in an undertone!"†

For every beholder of these statues there is sensuous pleasure in the beauty of form, grouping, light and shadow, and subdued color,

* Charles Clement, *Michael Angelo,* p. 60. Sampson Low, Marston & Co., London, 1896.

†Translated by Symonds, *Sonnets of Michael Angelo,* p. cix. Thomas B. Mosher, Portland, 1895.

though perhaps somewhat lessened by the somberness of mood and conception. On the other hand, there is profound joy born of the wonderful artistic harmony between idea and execution throughout. For each statue, one moment is chosen, and the entirely definite conception of the character portrayed is realized in that moment of time. The forms, drawn from life, are lifted and strengthened to an impressiveness just short of exaggeration. So far, the appeal is universal.

What of our emotion? Here again all depends upon what the student brings. Take the last of the statues described—the *Night;* it may seem trivial so to express it, but this figure in profound sleep does not make you feel sleepy. It is the *conception* of night and sleep—of relief from the bitterness of the waking life, that is expressed; and it may awaken and stimulate, instead of giving the mood of sleep. Let one recall the poems upon the statue with their revelation of the master's attitude toward his time; let one remember the old biographer's statement that Michael Angelo spent the days building fortifications to protect Florence from Medicean

enemies, and the nights working "stealthily" upon these statues to decorate Medicean tombs; let one call to mind all the heartache and world-weariness, the succession of artistic tragedies in the life of the master; and then one feels, beneath the joy in his wondrous achievement, a rush of profound human sympathy with his gloom and sadness; and the mood in which one leaves the chapel is akin to that with which one goes from witnessing some great tragedy, such as *Lear* or *Œdipus the King*.

Turn now to the sculpture of our own time in its best examples—the work of the French school. There is in Paris a characteristically modern statue of *Joan of Arc* by Chapu. The girl is half-sitting, half-kneeling, the strong maiden arms stretched down and out and the hands clasped upon the knees, while in the face, with its grave brooding upon the vision, is a look of earnest devotion, not only to the nation but to humanity.

Imagine two Greeks from the days of Phidias and Pericles standing before this statue.

They would receive, perhaps even more than we, the sensuous appeal of the beautiful forms, the artist's satisfaction in the adequacy and harmony of execution. They would get, quite as fully, the conception of earnest maidenhood devoted to a great cause; yet I question whether their feelings in the presence of this statue would be at all comparable to those of a modern observer. Each time I have stood before this work, after the first flush of pleasure at its beauty, I have felt up and down my back the peculiar shiver one feels when, for the first time, one hears in the distance the roar of London, or looks across the desolate Campagna, in the evening hour, and sees in the distance the domes and towers of Rome. It is the mood of humanity, the sense of the dignity and tragedy, comedy and romance of our common human life. This mood, however, depends upon one's response to the social ideal remolding our civilization; and I can imagine our two Greeks enjoying the statue, with no share whatever in the feeling I have described. Indeed, many moderns would be similarly untouched.

So with the multitude of modern works

springing from the same motive in the age: *The People Who Weep,** *The Cold,*† *Œdipus at Colonus,*‡ *The Pardon,*‖ *The Kiss of the Grandmother*§—with them all, the sensuous and æsthetic appeal and the conception are universal; the emotional association is brought by the beholder, and depends upon his character, knowledge and experience.

Let me give a crowning, if somewhat whimsical, illustration of the principle. In the Leipzig museum is a tinted bust by Max Klinger, called *Salome.* At either side of the base of the bust is a mask—the one, the face of a youth just beginning the career of vicious indulgence; the other, the blear-eyed, coarsened face of a middle-aged voluptuary, who has gone down in the slough of vice. Between them is the Salome bust. The face is repulsively fascinating, the eyelids heavy, the nostrils expanded with sensual desire, the lips full, the two sides of the face unsymmetrical,

* J. Van Bresbroech.
† Paul Roger-Bloche.
‡ Jean Hugues.
‖ E. Dubois.
§ J. Dampt.
All these are, or were until recently, in the Luxembourg.

subtly suggesting the stigmata of degeneration. It is simply a remarkable portrayal of one of the most dangerous and perverse forms the power of darkness takes in our time.

For some time a photograph of this bust stood on the desk in my study. This curious experience followed: every man friend who entered the study exclaimed on seeing the photograph, "What is that?" "It is interesting," "Tell us about it." Every woman who came in said, "What is that terrible thing?" "Put it out of sight!"

It is not necessary to explain the difference in attitude. The point is, that, in reference to a work expressing one entirely definite conception, the emotional response divided into directly opposing types in the two sexes. Is a better illustration needed of the fact that we bring the emotional response to a work of sculpture, and that what that response is depends upon us and our experience?

Let me sum up: sculpture can present in any statue or group but one moment of time; it works in completely realized form, directly copied from nature, but usually lifted above nature. The appeal of color is present, but

quite subordinate. Each work expresses a definite conception or range of conceptions—the same for all who appreciate. So, too, the appeal of beauty in form and color, in harmony and adequacy of execution, is universal; but the emotions felt by the observer are brought by him, and depend upon his character, knowledge and experience, thus varying with each person.

"If you know how to describe and write down the appearance of the forms, the painter can make them so that they appear enlivened with lights and shadows which create the very expression of the faces; herein you cannot attain with the pen where he attains with the brush."—Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci's Note-Books*, arranged by Edward McCurdy, p. 159.

"If the artist, out of ever-varying nature, can only make use of a single moment, and the painter especially can only use this moment from one point of view, whilst their works are intended to stand the test not only of a passing glance, but of long and repeated contemplation, it is clear that this moment, and the point from which this moment is viewed, cannot be chosen with too great a regard to results. Now that only is a happy choice which allows the imagination free scope. The longer we gaze, the more must our imagination add; and the more our imagination adds, the more we must believe we see. In the whole course of an emotion there is no moment which possesses this advantage so little as its highest stage. There is nothing beyond this; and the presentation of extremes to the eye clips the wings of fancy, prevents her from soaring beyond the impression of the senses, and compels her to occupy herself with weaker images; further than these she ventures not, but shrinks from the visible fulness of expression as her limit. Thus, if Laokoön sighs, the imagination can hear him shriek; but if he shrieks, it can neither rise a step higher above nor descend a step below this representation, without seeing him in a condition which, as it will be more endurable, becomes less interesting. It either hears him merely moaning, or sees him already dead.

Furthermore, this single moment receives through art an unchangeable duration; therefore it must not express anything, of which we can think only as transitory. All appearances, to whose very being, according to our ideas, it is essential that they suddenly break forth and as suddenly vanish, that they can be what they are but for a moment,—all such appearances, be they pleasing or be they horrible, receive, through the prolongation which art gives them, such an unnatural character, that at every repeated glance the impression they make grows weaker and weaker, and at last fills us with dislike or disgust of the whole object."—Lessing, *Laokoön*, pp. 19, 20.

CHAPTER X

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PAINTING

THE transition from sculpture to painting is made by easy steps through relief work; and it is possible that it may have been so made historically, thus giving rise to painting. The reclining goddesses of the Parthenon, if completely finished in the round, were planned, as we saw, to be placed against the temple and seen from in front and below. From these to the low relief of the Parthenon frieze is but a step; and it is only another step to the outlining and coloring of figures on a flat surface, and we have painting.

Relief work, indeed, may pass over into the field that is characteristic of painting rather than sculpture. Take a beautiful example of classic work—the small low relief of the *Nymph with the Infant Bacchus,* found in the forum of Trajan and now in the Lateran collection. The nymph holds the baby Bacchus

on her lap, giving him to drink of goat's milk. The goat browses at her feet. A young faun behind her plays upon pipes of Pan. Above in the background is a hill with a tree upon it, in which is a nest of little birds. A serpent, twined around the tree, threatens the young birds, while the mother bird, fluttering her wings, attempts to frighten the serpent away.

I have described the little work in detail to indicate the great complication of the subject-matter. The forms are all of sculpture, but the spirit is rather of painting. The central figures do not have to be planned for some external environment, as in sculpture, but the setting is fully given in the work itself. A wide range of objects, which could not be presented together in sculpture, is here grouped in such a composition as painting employs, with a considerable use of perspective. On the other hand, the satisfying reality of sculpture in representing forms in the round, is lost, and the effect of the work depends upon some measure of artistic illusion.

Relief work is carried to its farthest point in the last bronze doors made by Ghiberti for the baptistry of Florence—doors that Michael

Angelo said were worthy to be the gates of paradise. Here, several scenes are represented, with much use of perspective, in a single panel of the door. Such complication of subject-matter goes beyond what should be attempted in relief work, into the field of painting. Indeed, the combination of scene within scene passes the limits that painting should observe, and reminds one of the quaint portrayal, in the work of early Italian masters, of various scenes of a story in a single painting.

Contrast with such complicated relief work the simple form of painting surviving from ancient times in the Pompeian frescoes. While none of these are masterpieces, they are thoroughly characteristic of the general type of work done by classic painters. Ancient painting never freed itself wholly from the laws and restrictions of sculpture; it was characteristically sculpture reduced to a flat surface. Thus the Pompeian frescoes present chiefly human figures—here a group of gods, there one of bacchanalian revelers, most common of all, decorative rows of dancing cupids. At times one gets the perspective of a room or a bit of formal garden, but the background generally

is slight indeed. Thus in range and complication of subject-matter, the reliefs studied go much farther into the field of painting than do these frescoes, and generally as far in use of perspective. In color, however, these frescoes add a new wealth of impression as compared with sculpture. Even the painted statues of antiquity were far less powerful in the appeal of color than these paintings.

Let us turn now to the greatest epoch of painting, the period of the renaissance in Italy. In the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice is one of the masterpieces of Tintoretto, the *Adam and Eve*. It represents the two beautiful nude figures seated in the garden, at the moment when Eve gives Adam the apple. In one corner, quaintly enough, Tintoretto has portrayed two small figures being driven out of the garden by the angel with the flaming sword. Over the whole painting is a rich, warm wealth of mellow, golden light.

As with sculpture, painting is limited to the portrayal of a single moment of time. The one Tintoretto has chosen is the critical in-

stant of the fall of man, which looks back to the creation and on to the whole history of human life. In his effort to tell more of the story, by painting the little scene in the corner, showing the first important consequence of the action portrayed, Tintoretto, with child-like whimsicality, has transgressed the limits of painting.

The forms represented are all taken from life and nature, but as in sculpture they are lifted with an element of idealism. They are not given by direct imitation, however, but on a flat surface through the illusion of perspective. This method, limiting the artistic satisfaction in complete realization of form, makes it possible for the painter to give the whole environment of his central figures and the lighting over them.

The first effect of the painting on the beholder is to give direct sensuous pleasure, through the beauty of the bodies, the garden, the warm colors and mellow light. The main conception is definite: it is perhaps less Adam and Eve, than the temptress and the man, universally treated. The æsthetic satisfaction in the harmony of idea and expression, and of the

composition of the elements in the whole work, is the same for all who appreciate. Will not the emotion experienced, aside from the sensuous and æsthetic response, depend here, as in sculpture, upon the observer, his attitude toward the biblical story, his experience and knowledge of the relations of men and women?

A more impressive example is given in the great, if marred and forbidding, painting done in Michael Angelo's old age on the end wall of the Sistine Chapel, long after his painting of the ceiling. Dr. Harris spoke of this *Last Judgment* as first giving him the key to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, since it attempts to portray in a single moment—the moment when the final consequences of good and evil are evident—what Dante works out in the whole of his poem.*

Dantesque, the painting is, in somber gloom. The dead rise from the earth, the saints fearfully enter salvation above, the lost are condemned, and the devils exult in their prey. Above, in the center, is the terrible Christ, the judge of all the earth, athletic, powerful,

* W. T. Harris, *The Spiritual Sense of Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 6. D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1889.

threatening with uplifted arm, under which cowers his tender mother, as if in pity for her human kind.

How well this painting illustrates the possibilities of the single moment to which the art is always restricted. With all the complication of figures and situation, it is just one instant that is portrayed; yet, more than any other, it is the moment that looks before and after, gathering up all the past and indicating the eternal future—the moment when good is forever affirmed to be life, and evil, death. Thus the painting gathers up and expresses the whole range of ethical and religious conceptions of mediæval Christianity, and is a fitting conclusion to the majestic interpretation of human history unrolled on the ceiling of the chapel by the same master hand.

Indeed, the range of conceptions in the *Last Judgment,* as of figures, is too vast, and tends to overwhelm and confuse one. This, with the marring effect of repainting and the ruin of time, causes one to find less sensuous and æsthetic pleasure here than in many other great paintings. The great conceptions are in the work, however, and the student who

persists is rewarded, not only by a wealth of thought, but by increasing satisfaction in the masterly expression of the ideas.

What does one feel in the presence of this painting? Is it not evident that the answer will differ according to one's religious training and belief? Is Michael Angelo's theology real to you? If so, you will experience one range of emotions. If you look upon that theology as an interesting but obsolete historical phase of thought, then your feelings will be of widely different character. Are you accustomed to pray to the Virgin, or not? Is hell a reality to you, or a figment of the imagination? Do you believe in the resurrection of the flesh and the judgment day? Is it not evident that, as you answer these questions, your emotions in the presence of the painting will be determined?

So with other elements of your experience: are you familiar with the middle age so that you have thought yourself sympathetically into its philosophy of life? Are you a lover of Dante? Do you know Michael Angelo's relation, as prophet of the afternoon and the sunset, to the masters who led up to him?

Are you familiar with the story of his early life in Florence and the influence of Savonarola upon him? These elements, too, will help to determine the subtle and far-reaching range of emotions you experience before the work of art.

Let us turn now to modern work. In the Louvre is one of Corot's most beautiful paintings, representing a forest, with a group of dancing figures in the foreground, and over the whole that mystic, indescribable atmosphere—a "light that never was on sea or land."

Here a definite phase of nature is given clearly, with ideal beauty, for the imagination. Besides the sensuous and æsthetic pleasure in the beauty of color and light, the charm of the composition, and the harmony of expression, most of us find a restful peace in turning from the busy world about us to the calm of nature and the idealized suggestion of human life. This mood, however, results from what we bring to the painting; and I can imagine our two Greeks speculating as

to why the artist should have cared to spend so much time representing that forest, with its strange atmosphere, and those curious little idyllic figures.

Since sculpture and painting are alike limited to the portrayal of one moment, it is necessary, as has been suggested, that the moment should be chosen so that the attention can rest in it without strain. That is one reason why landscape painting, portraying nature in repose, is so restful, while many military paintings, which may strike the eye impressively at the first glance, seem theatrical and distress the attention as one studies them. Generally speaking, the bodies portrayed must be in a position that could be sustained more than an instant, in order to produce a satisfying artistic effect. Thus the portrayal of vigorous action is especially difficult in these arts. Sometimes it is successfully achieved, as, for example, in what is, to me, the greatest painting in the New York Metropolitan gallery—Meissonier's *Friedland 1807*. It portrays, with that marvelous fidelity to detail that marked Meissonier beyond all his contemporaries, Napoleon seated

upon his white horse, with his generals and aides massed behind him, while at full gallop and shouting open-mouthed, the Imperial Guard sweeps by. There could scarcely be a portrayal of more intense action: one can almost hear the wild, irregular hoof-beats and the tumultuous sea of cries, *"Vive l'Empereur!"*; yet the work is one of the few military paintings I could live with, and I have sat before it for an unbroken hour at a time with no distress to the attention and with increasing exhilaration.

What is the key to the paradox? Note that the moment chosen, intense as it is, is not the highest moment of the action. It is the one just before the onrushing troops sweep by the Emperor. Thus the action would reach its climax a little later, and the imagination is led on to fulfill it. This helps to give the peculiar impression of eternity to the action. The guard seems forever sweeping by. The deeper explanation, however, is found in the fact that the intense action of the onrushing cavalry is so wonderfully balanced by the rock-like repose of the figure of Napoleon, with the troops massed behind

him. *He* is the center, not the galloping Guard. Silent, firm, inscrutable, sinister, sphinx-like as if hewn from eternal stone, he is the symbol of utter mastery. He absorbs profoundly the attention, fascinating and eluding, in a different mood, as completely as a Cleopatra. One cannot justly call this a military painting. It is a profound study of a leader's mastery of the mass; it is merely incidental, though characteristic of history, that this mastery is portrayed in the military field.

What intense sensuous delight there is in the marvelous grouping of colors, the play of light, the beauty of the moving and standing horses, the bodies and faces of the soldiers, the shimmer of the very grass blades before the horses' feet. How smitingly the central conception, with all its associations, is borne in upon the mind. What vital æsthetic pleasure is given by the perfect mastery in expressing the content of thought, and in the satisfying harmony of the whole. What are one's emotions? Again the answer must be entirely personal, depending upon one's view of the character and career of Napoleon,

one's attitude toward militarism in the life of mankind. My own feeling has been one of intense admiration, mingled with profound sadness. Is there a greater tragedy in history, more cosmic in scope, than the career of Napoleon? What genius, what mastery, what action, what glorious victories; but how meaningless the aim and how futile the end of it all! A cataclysm of the nations, a remaking of the map of Europe, and then —all things reverting to much what they had been, with a solitary prisoner looking mournfully out from the rock of St. Helena at the setting sun. Such extravagant expenditure of power, such ghastly waste of life, for—*nothing!* Is there a greater illustration of the fact that power is always a means and never an end? These moods and reflections, however, are brought by the observer, and are in him rather than in the painting.

One of the most impressive paintings in the Luxembourg is a portrayal, by Bastien-Lepage, of two peasants resting at the noon hour, entitled *Les Foins.* The man is stretched flat upon his back, in the sleep of exhaustion. His body is thin and ill-fed, in worn clothing,

the trousers bagging pathetically at the knees. The woman beside him is seated on the ground, leaning forward on her abdomen, her legs stretched out before her, her wearied arms resting heavily. In her face is the look of dumb, half-wakened hunger for she knows not what, the rendering of which makes Bastien-Lepage, with Millet, a prophet of modern democracy. Behind the two figures, the dull field, in which they have been toiling, stretches monotonously away.

The moment chosen, while one of repose, interprets the whole life of these obscure toilers, representing such a mass of mankind. The forms are copied from nature, in their dull setting, with such faithful realism that the pleasure for the senses is far less than the æsthetic satisfaction in the adequate expression of the given theme. The unifying atmosphere gives a touch of idealism that puts the whole in perspective for the observer's mind. What of his feelings in the presence of the painting? I can but give mine: each time I have stood before this work it has moved me almost to tears; yet I recall an art-loving friend standing beside me and

saying, "Why do you suppose he chose to paint a subject so lacking in beauty?" The point is that one's emotional reaction depends here, less upon the painting, than upon one's relation to the larger aspirations of democracy in our time, and upon one's experience, or the lack of it, in poverty and toil.

To sum up: in sculpture and painting alike a definite conception or range of conceptions, real or ideal, is given. The conceptions are expressed in definite forms, imitated and idealized from nature, and grouped in space relations. In both arts the single work is limited to the representation of one moment of time, and a story can be interpreted only by choosing a moment that looks before and after, and is significant of the whole. In both, the moment chosen must be one in which the attention can rest, and if the action portrayed is too violent and transitory, the mind is usually distressed and the permanent effect of the work marred. In both, the forms are statical and can be returned to again and again. In both, color is used, but always in sculpture and usually in painting, subordinated to the more masculine

element of form. Both give direct sensuous and æsthetic pleasure; but in both alike, the range of deeper emotions is brought by the observer and associated with the conceptions given in the work, being dependent upon the character, knowledge and experience of the beholder rather than upon the work itself.

The differences between the two arts are deeply significant, but still, less important than these fundamental likenesses. Sculpture, emphasizing more strongly the masculine element of form, realizing it completely in the round, is far more limited in scope than painting, but the most adequate and satisfying of the arts within those limits. Painting, less realistic and complete in directly imitating forms as they are in life, working upon a flat surface and depending upon the illusions of perspective, is immeasurably broadened, as compared with sculpture, in the range and complication of its subject-matter, while it makes far greater use of the relatively feminine, but sensuously and in some measure emotionally appealing element of color. Sculpture, moreover, must plan its creations for an external environment, whether it be

the niche and wall of a temple, or the light and shadows of the open air. Painting may give in the work itself the whole surrounding of its central subject, with the play of light and shadow and the unifying atmosphere over the whole.

"How, ye formal philosophers, ye men of the 'sounding arabesque,' unto whom the spirit shows itself not, because ye do not believe in it, or search after it in the organic structure with the gross scalpel of the anatomist—know ye not that Goethe's 'disengaging one's self from a mood,' which he found in poetry, also applies to the musician—that every truly artistic tone-work is also an 'occasional poem'? Surely, no musical thought has ever been generated with vital power in your soul, or, if you had one, it was a greenhouse plant. Otherwise you would know, that the artist hastens with everything that delights and pains him to his beloved art, and desires of it that it should preserve each mood for him in the sacred vessel of its beautiful form for all time."—Ambros, *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry*, p. 106.

"The more definitely a composer aims at making his music an expression of emotion, the more firmly must he fashion it according to the dictates of intellect, for were he to attempt emotional expression without preserving the supremacy of the reason in his work, he would speedily fall into formlessness, and instead of enlightening would merely bewilder his hearers. In all art creative, or interpretative, the emotion must be under the dominance of the reason, or else there is no method, and art without method is inconceivable."—Henderson, *What is Good Music*, p. 98.

"It must be in music, that language intelligible to all men, that the great equalizing power is to be found, which, converting the language of ideas into the language of the feelings, would bring the deepest secrets of the artistic conception to general comprehension, especially if this comprehension can be made distinct through the plastic expression of dramatic representation,—can be given such a distinctness as up to this time painting alone has been able to claim as its peculiar influence."—Wagner, in "The Music of the Future," *Art Life and Theories*, p. 141.

CHAPTER XI

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF MUSIC

OF all the fine arts, music is the most difficult to define for the intellect, because it is the most subtle, seeming to produce its effects as by a miracle. Indeed, that a mere succession of ordered sounds, varying in pitch, loudness and quality, should do to the human spirit what music accomplishes, must always remain a marvel.

On the threshold we meet a perplexing paradox. In one aspect music is primitive and universal; in another, it is connected with the latest and most refined civilization. Certain forms of music go back to the earliest times and are everywhere appreciated; yet the major development of the art has come within the last three hundred years. There is scarcely a savage tribe without some form of music; young children respond involuntarily to certain musical appeals; yet the full

appreciation of much of modern music demands special gifts or a high measure of cultivation. Thus there is this initial puzzle in the relation of music to life. Something in music is evidently simple and universal; something in it answers the need of highly developed refinement and civilization.

Perhaps we can throw light on the difficulty if we compare the response of different persons to the various elements of which music is composed. One responds mainly to rhythm, another to rhythm and melody, a third to both these and also to harmony. Thus there are three distinct elements in music, forming a progression away from simplicity and universality toward cultivated intelligence. The first and most universal of these is *rhythm.* This principle is everywhere. It is connected, as has often been shown, with the respiration of the breath, the beating of the heart and the circulation of the blood. Thus the response to it is universal and instinctive. There are few human beings, young or old, cultivated or ignorant, who are not stimulated to some physical movement in harmony with such a rhythmic appeal as that of a brass band

playing a lively marching tune. Cultivation seems in fact to have little to do with this response to pure rhythm; it may even be stronger in the primitive and ignorant than in the intellectual and refined.

Melody is a more complex principle, subsuming rhythm under itself. Melody depends upon the pitch, accent and quality of tone, and is an ordered succession of sounds appealing as unified and beautiful to the sense of hearing. It may indeed be called the soul of music.* Melody is also a widely appealing element in music, yet only the simplest melodies are universal, while the more complicated demand some measure of musical aptitude or cultivation for their full appreciation. Many persons instinctively and vigorously respond to rhythm who cannot "carry a tune," and require cultivation to respond fully to melody.

* "Let us establish first of all the fact that the *one true form of music is melody;* that without melody music is inconceivable, and that music and melody are inseparable. That a piece of music has *no* melody, can therefore only mean that the musician has not attained to the real formation of an effective form, that can have a decisive influence upon the feelings; which simply shows the absence of talent in the composer."—Wagner, in "The Music of the Future," *Art Life and Theories,* p. 175.

Harmony is the element of music latest in development, furthest from universal in appeal, demanding far more musical training for its appreciation. Note that in our discussion of music "harmony" is used in the technical sense. In the general usage, harmony means symmetry—the agreement of elements of a composition, or of form and content, and is thus a universal principle of all the arts; but in music, *harmony* has a technical meaning as *the consonance or concord of sounds occurring simultaneously or in quick succession.* This is the principle, the development and progressive application of which is the glory of the musical art during the last three hundred years, expanding immeasurably the scope of music and giving it the place it holds as a leading art of civilization. High intellectual and æsthetic cultivation is needed for the full appreciation of this element of music in its more complicated forms. Thus varied is the relation of the three great elements of music—rhythm, melody and harmony—to human sensibility and intelligence.

All art must draw its forms ultimately

from nature, and to this law, music is no exception; yet the relation it sustains to nature is widely different from that of sculpture and painting. The latter arts depend, as we have seen, upon the direct imitation of forms given in nature. No matter how great the element of idealization in the *Venus de Milo,* or the figures upon the Medicean tombs, these are, nevertheless, human bodies and faces copied directly from life. So a Titian painting with its transfiguring golden light, or a Corot landscape with its idyllic mood and subtle atmosphere, after all, directly imitates, even though it idealizes the forest, the air and the clouds.

In music, also, every sound used is found somewhere in nature; it is difficult to imagine a sound not so given. There are, moreover, sounds which form a kind of natural music. Take the best of examples—the sighing of the wind through the pine forest. Who is irresponsive to that irregular rising and falling spheric melody, the wind wakens from the multitudinous pine-needles when, on a warm summer day, one lies upon the ground under the singing boughs. All the

elements of music are present here. There is irregular rhythm with the rise and fall of the sound. A peculiar natural melody comes as the wind freshens and lessens. Even the element of harmony is in some measure involved, as the countless needles blend their slight tones in the billowy waves of sound.

It is difficult to abstract the impression of this natural music from the associated appeals through other senses. The play of light and shadow, the somberness of the boughs, the aromatic fragrance, the feeling of the bed of pine needles—all blend in one impression; and indeed it is, as we shall see, this fusing of many elements appealing through different senses, that gives the beauty of nature its wondrous charm.

Let us try, however, to isolate the impression of the music. There is direct sensuous pleasure given. Deeper than this, the music puts the hearer into a definite type of mood, which may perhaps be described as one of calm, exalted joy. The train of reflection accompanying this mood will, however, vary with every hearer.

Next to the pine music, the most impress-

ive form of natural music is the beating of the surf upon the sand or rocks of the shore. Here, also, the impressions through the sense of sight complicate and make difficult the abstraction of the effect of sound. More, however, than in the music of the pines, the element of rhythm is here, strongly and regularly accentuated. The melody is also more definite, if less moving, than in the other instance. Harmony, in some degree, is present in the union of sounds made by the wash of the long rolling waves on the irregular contour of the shore. Thus here, too, something of all these elements of the art of music is present.

Every lover of the sea will recognize at once the direct sensuous pleasure given by the sound of the surf. It tends, too, to produce one of several moods, influenced by the spirit in which we come. There is something peculiarly soothing, indeed almost benumbing, to the tired or grieving spirit in this music, and thus we tend to pass into a general mood of subdued meditation. What do we think about? Ah, to that question only a personal answer can be given. The emotional state is

generic, the train of reflections is associated by the individual mind, and depends upon what it brings.

Another form of natural music which really rises to the plane of instinctive art is bird-song. Here rhythm is definitely used, and the element of simple, brief melody is highly developed. Technical harmony is absent. Perhaps for that very reason bird-song shows clearly the type of sensuous and emotional appeal made by music. I need not dwell on the pure sensuous delight we have in such music, nor upon the fact that bird-song lifts us generally to an emotional state of glad joy. Still, different bird songs produce moods widely apart, as is evident if one will compare the weirdly somber feeling with which one hears at night the reiterated three melodic notes of the whip-poor-will, with the tender mood wakened by the song of the hermit thrush. It is a further clue to the nature of music that bird songs spring from specific states of feeling, as particularly that of love-making, in the birds themselves.

Finally, a high kind of natural music is evident in the tones of the speaking voice.

Rhythm and melody are always present in the speech of deep feeling, with the flow, inflections and modulations of the words; while voices differ from each other in quality (timbre) as much as do musical instruments. One hears voices with the moving, almost strident sonorousness of the violoncello; others that have the clear, stimulating call of the flute; others suggest the liquid melting tenderness of the harp. There are voices which, even speaking in a language one does not understand, have power not only to give keen sensuous pleasure, but to move one, by the tones alone, to tenderness and almost to tears.

Thus there are many forms of natural music in which are found all the sound-forms the art uses; yet the main business of music is not directly to copy these sounds, as sculpture and painting imitate the forms of the natural world. At times, it is true, music does this, as in imitating the sound of falling water, the rustling of the forest, or the twittering of birds. Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* gives excellent examples of the use of such imitation in great art, and others are found in Wagner's *Nibelungen Tetralogy*.

This is but a minor device in music, however, and may easily be carried too far. Then it becomes a mere trick, as in those show pieces, such as the *Wakening of the Lion* or the *Falling of the Waters,* which graduates of what, without intentional irony, we used to call "finishing schools," played to display their skill on Commencement Day to admiring audiences of parents and friends.

Instead of imitating natural music as its main function, what the art of music really does is *to resolve the sound forms, given in nature, into their abstract elements, and then deliberately recombine these in harmony with human sensibility and intelligence.* It is thus that we get the scale, which is a conventionally accepted order of intervals among these abstract sound forms. This is illustrated by the fact that widely different scales have been in use at times, as for instance, among the Greeks. So, too, in Chinese music an order of sounds is used which is sensuously painful to western ears; while our music is said to sound no less discordant to the Chinese, habituated to their own convention.

Music thus differs widely from sculpture

and painting in being less *imitative* and more *creatively expressive.* It is interesting that architecture, of all the arts dealing with forms in space-relations, is the one most closely comparable in method with music. I can still recall the sense of elation in a fresh discovery when I saw this identity between the two arts—the one dealing with spatial, the other with time forms, the one appealing to the sense of sight, the other to hearing—for it was a discovery to my own mind. Architecture also finds all its forms ultimately in nature. The tree trunk gave the column, its leaves the first capital; the Roman arch goes back to the cave-roof, the Gothic, to the aisles of a northern forest; yet the main function of architecture is not to copy these forms. It does so, if at all, only incidentally. Its method is to take these forms and reduce them to their abstract elements of line and proportion, and then to recombine these in harmony with the demands of the human senses and intelligence. So in architecture, as in music, mathematics finds severe and exact application. Thus architecture, though limited by conditions of utility, accomplishes in dealing with space-

relations something similar to what music accomplishes in time-relations, and the centuries-old comparison of architecture to music is seen to be no extravagant metaphor, but rather to rest upon an illuminating scientific basis. The characterization of architecture as "frozen music" goes back to Goethe and beyond. How significant it is! Who can stand before such a temple as the *Cathedral of Milan,* with its spires of aspiration, its countless adornments, its vast aisles, gothic roof, mingled light, forest of columns and great open spaces, and not feel as if a symphony of Beethoven had been caught in an instant and frozen into stone.

Browning, with his delight in giving a fresh turn to an old thought, reverses the comparison, and to him, in *Abt Vogler,* music is liquid architecture, flowing forth into its many-domed, myriad-spired temple of sound as inevitably as the legendary palace of Solomon, built magically "to pleasure the princess he loved." The comparison either way is illuminating because it rests in a profound truth. Thus the characteristic difference in appeal between the arts portraying statical

forms in space, and those dealing with dynamic forms in time, will best appear if first we compare architecture and music in their respective effects.

Consider first the noblest temple the Greeks achieved—the ruined glory of the *Parthenon*—supreme symbol of Athenian greatness in the wonder of the Periclean age. Mutilated as it is by the vandalism of blind races and dark ages, it is still alive with the immortality the Greeks gave to all they created. How small it seems in contrast to the vast temples of Christian and Oriental art, but how perfect! The simple row of columns surrounds it, each planned to rest the eye with harmony. The roof rests easily upon these. In the entire structure is no mathematically straight line. Instinctively or consciously, the Greek master gave the slight or definite curve that charms with ease and beauty. The decorations—pediment, frieze and metope—are all planned in restrained subordination to the dominant idea inspiring the whole.

The temple gives sensuous pleasure with its beauty of line, proportion and color, but

through this it gives the pure *architectonic* conception for the intellect of man, with the deep æsthetic delight in the adequacy and harmony with which the idea is expressed. The further emotions one experiences in its presence depend upon its setting and associations and one's familiarity with these, as fully as is true of the marble groups in the British Museum, ravished from its decorations.

Turn to a representative example of mediæval Christian art from the same field. *Notre Dame* broods somberly over the surging city of Paris, as it has brooded for centuries of time; vast, multiform, with its two towers and numerous spires; the rose windows blending forms and light; its countless decorations portraying scenes from Christian and Hebraic history, teaching through the eye the religious story, blending the grotesque with the somber and terrible in those strange gargoyles—wild children of the northern imagination, leering down from eaves and towers.

Within, the wealth of stately columns stretches bewilderingly away, the Gothic arches multiplying the impression of space in

aisles and nave, the mingled light lending mystery and awe to the whole. What a masterly blending it is of a bewildering multitude of forms, fused through the unity of appreciation in the spirit creating them all.

Sensuous and artistic pleasure—in what full measure they are given! Deeper, a wealth of conceptions, not united in one architectonic idea as in the Greek, but associated and blent through the unity of the human spirit, is expressed for the beholder. A somewhat definite mood is also awakened by the temple, its setting and associations; but the deeper range of emotions experienced in its presence must vary with the individual and depend upon what he brings as completely as with painting and sculpture.

To make clear the effect of music we must, of course, exclude for the present, song, which is a composite art uniting poetry with music in a new appeal. Let us take as a first example in music, a relatively slight composition such as Schumann's *Arabesque* (opus 18) or Chopin's *Impromptu* (opus 29). Each of the titles is suggestive: the "Impromptu" is a brief expression of a mood

and spontaneous musical conception; the "Arabesque" calls up at once those cognate delicate traceries in the adornment of Mohammedan architecture. Each of these brief compositions is made of a series of sound forms, differing in length, pitch and loudness, and arranged by the principles of rhythm, melody and harmony. Please note that the series is not made of statical forms, but is *dynamic,* one form or group of forms dying as the next is born, so that the composition must be recreated every time it is enjoyed. Thus the striking contrast in method between music and the arts presenting forms in space is evident.

The sounds and their arrangement give direct sensuous pleasure, while their order and combination, beautifully expressing a musical concept, give æsthetic satisfaction. Further, all the hearers of either of these brief pieces would feel much the same general mood awakened by the composition, and would even experience in common the slight succession of emotional states, corresponding to the series of melodic forms. The *train of reflections,* however, associated with the

emotions, would be wholly individual and in no way determined or indicated by the composition.

Suppose the most appealing of Chopin's nocturnes to be played sympathetically for a roomful of listeners. All appreciative hearers would experience, in different degrees, the sensuous and æsthetic pleasure given by the composition. All would tend to experience the same general series of states of feeling, being lifted, melted to tenderness, made to feel the pathos and the pain, subdued to the solution at the end; yet there would be as many different trains of meditation as there were persons in the room. You would think of the poem you know and which you associate with the music; I would think perhaps of Shelley's lyric *To the Night.* You would meditate upon a phase of your own experience, the music recalls to you; I would brood over a chapter of my life, unknown to you. In the appeal of music the series of emotional states is given, the train of reflections is brought by the hearer, and is dependent upon his character, knowledge and experience.

The same truth holds with reference to all musical compositions from the least to the greatest. Consider such a world-masterpiece as the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven, worthy to rank with *Hamlet,* the *Divine Comedy,* the *Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel* and the *Last Supper* of Leonardo as a supreme achievement of human genius. This complex work —the crowning expression of Beethoven's mind—presents a succession of movements, differing each from the others in rhythm, melody and harmony, and thus comparable to a series of works of art, yet all strongly united by common themes and elements of melody in one masterpiece. Throughout, the work gives sensuous pleasure through its sound forms, and profound artistic joy in the beauty and harmony with which its basal ideas and moods find expression. Each movement, moreover, tends to waken in the hearer a dominant emotional state, and below that a succession of emotions, rising to the supreme exaltation of the concluding passage. The accompanying trains of reflection are, however, as completely individual as in the case of the little Schumann *Arabesque* first

studied. Do not misunderstand me: I do not mean that music is "not intellectual," as is often wrongly said. There is a profound and exact intellectual basis in all music; and to the construction of the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven went surely as great intellectual power as is shown in the creation of *Faust* or *Macbeth.* I do mean that music does not give a series of definite ideas for the intellect, as is true of the arts dealing with forms in space, but that its dynamic series of sound-forms tends to waken in the hearer a somewhat definite series of emotional states, while the associated ideas or meditations are unique in each person.

The contrast with the spatial arts is then evident. Sculpture, painting and architecture present, through statical forms, definite conceptions for the intellect and the imagination, while the emotions we experience vary with each individual and depend upon what he brings. Music, on the other hand, through a dynamic succession of forms in time, tends to arouse a common series of emotions, while the associated trains of reflection vary with each person and depend upon his knowledge

and experience. Thus each of these two contrasting types has the strength wanting in the other, or each makes emphatic what is subordinate in the other.

To make it clear, compare the treatment of the same material in the two contrasting types of art. Take the Margaret story from Goethe's *Faust,* as given in Gounod's music and in the numerous paintings of it by German artists. Suppose you were quite ignorant of the Faust story, and heard the orchestral music of Gounod's opera with the songs given in a language you did not understand: what would you get? You would receive first a large measure of sensuous and artistic delight. Beyond that, would be wakened in you, in succession, the great emotions associated with the story—the passionate longing of Faust, the melting tenderness of Siebel's love song, the blind hunger of Margaret at the spinning-wheel, her sorrow and despair—all these would be given. These moods, however, could be associated with a thousand different love stories, and your reflections, in listening to the music under the

conditions assumed, would in no way touch Faust and Margaret.

The painter, as we have seen, is limited to a single moment of the story in each work, and can interpret the whole only through significant moments. He can paint Faust bargaining with Mephistopheles. He can portray Margaret before the Cathedral door, in all the blushing charm of her young maidenhood, Faust gazing upon her in ruthless desire, and Mephistopheles with sinister sneer behind. He can picture Margaret at the spinning-wheel, with far-dreaming, tear-dimmed eyes, and the look of love-longing in her face. He can represent Margaret upon the straw of her prison, with the wild-staring look of remorse and madness. Thus he can give, beyond the sensuous and æsthetic pleasure, clear conceptions of the characters and situations for our imagination and intellect. What we *feel,* however, is not necessarily the series of emotions aroused by Gounod's music. Our feelings depend upon our attitude toward the characters and the story, upon what we have lived and know of love and pain.

A northern artist has painted two pictures dealing with the Brunhild story. One represents the Valkyr carrying, across her cloud-riding horse, a dead warrior to the hall of Valhalla. The other pictures Brunhild at the moment of her enchanted imprisonment. Odin imprints a kiss upon her brow as she stands there—a symbol of woe and resolution, while the flames spring up from the ground round about.

Thus each of these paintings represents a single instant of the story, the second a peculiarly interpretative moment, which to one who knows the legend carries something of the whole. The concept of the cloud maiden is definitely given with the clear idea of the situation of her life. Our emotions in the presence of these paintings depend upon our knowledge of northern mythology and its treatment in various arts, and upon our own life experience. Compare with this the music of Wagner's *Walküre,* without the libretto and the stage portrayal. The pure, clear *motif* of the Valkyr maiden awakens a mood of exultant freedom. It is the call of the wilderness of untamed Nature, of the wild

hungers of the strong, free life. With this motive dominant, through what a wealth of emotions the music carries us; yet these could be associated with many other stories besides that of Brunhild, while our *thoughts,* as we listen to the music, depend upon what of life and knowledge we bring.

Thus the strength of the one type of art is the limitation of the other; each makes explicit in its appeal what the other subordinates.

"In its *ideal* feature music keeps within its natural boundaries, so long as it does not undertake to go beyond its expressional capacity—that is, so long as the poetical thought of the composer becomes intelligible from the moods called forth by his work and the train of ideas stimulated thereby, that is, from the composition itself, and so long as nothing foreign, not organically connected with the music itself, must be dragged in, in order to assist comprehension."—Ambros, *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry*, pp. 181, 182.

"That which so strongly attracted our great poets towards music was the fact that it was at the same time the purest form and the most sensuous realization of that form. The abstract arithmetical number, the mathematical figure, meets us here as a creation having an irresistible influence upon the emotions—that is, it appears as *melody;* and this can be as unerringly established, so as to produce sensuous effect, as the poetic diction of written language, on the contrary, is abandoned to every whim in the personal character of the person reciting it. What was not practically possible for Shakespeare—to be *himself* the actor of each one of his rôles—is practicable for the musical composer, and this with great definiteness,—since he speaks to us directly through each one of the musicians who execute his works. In this case the transmigration of the poet's soul into the body of the performer takes place according to the infallible laws of the most positive *technique;* and the composer who gives the correct measure for a technically right performance of his work, becomes completely one with the musician who performs it, to an extent that can at most only be affirmed of the constructive artist in regard to a work which he had himself produced in color or stone,—if, indeed, a transmigration of his soul into lifeless matter is a supposable case."—Wagner, in "The Purpose of the Opera," *Art Life and Theories*, pp. 226, 227.

CHAPTER XII

MUSIC AND THE SPIRIT

ONE aspect of distinctly intellectual response to music lies in the analytical study of its compositions. To work out the combination of motives in a Wagner opera, or analyze the complicated harmonies of a Beethoven symphony, is an intellectual process which may give delight. This process, however, is comparable to the theoretic analysis of line and proportion in architecture, or of design, composition and color in sculpture and painting, and is totally different from the direct response in appreciation to the appeal of the work of art. The intellectual pleasure in such a process is, in fact, exactly the same in kind with that we experience in working a difficult problem in calculus. It is keen pleasure we experience, but so different from the direct response to the appeal of the art that the analytical process may even stand in

the way of the latter. This need not be, for rightly conducted analytical study increases the power to appreciate; but where the analysis is made an end in itself, it may hamper rather than help the synthetic response.

Have you ever heard some art critic analyze the principles of design in Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*? It is an interesting process, showing how the painting is composed of mathematical triangles, each linked to the next; yet one may carry such study so far that one *sees the triangles and not the painting.* Similarly, one may carry the analysis of the structure of a Wagner opera so far that one *hears the motifs and not the music.* Such study in any art is a valuable help to appreciation, but is always a means and never an end, and should not be confused with the direct response to the appeal of art.

An example came under my own observation, where a man of fine talents and superior education seemed to be quite without "an ear for music." Having every opportunity for cultivation, living for years in the art centers of Europe, associating constantly with musical people, he came to resent increasingly the

fact that they found such joy in what to him was a sealed book. So he set to work to master music. He employed the best teachers, mastered the difficult subject of harmony, advancing so far that he could analyze an opera or symphony into its elements and recompose them. He attended musical concerts and greatly enjoyed his processes of analysis; yet he remained as deaf to music in the true sense as when he began his study. His case is exceptional, but it illustrates the principle that intellectual understanding of the technique by which a work of art is produced, is a totally different thing from the appreciation, spontaneous or cultivated, of the created work. One may be quite ignorant of the principles of design and composition, and yet appreciate a painting; and one may know nothing intellectually of *motifs* and technical harmony, and yet respond deeply to the appeal of music.

There are various ways by which a train of intellectual associations may be suggested in connection with the direct musical appeal. The simplest of these, frequently employed by composers, is in skillfully naming a work. This device is legitimate, and is occasionally used

even by great masters, as in Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony,* which at once suggests various sounds and activities of the Nature world, or the *Heroic Symphony,* in hearing which we are expected to reflect upon the career of Napoleon. So Mendelssohn's *Spring Song* or Schumann's *Kinderscenen* suggests immediately a specific train of reflection. This device, however, must be used wisely and with restraint, or it easily degenerates into a trick, as in the "show pieces" referred to in the preceding chapter; and the great composers have usually preferred merely to number their works, with a general title indicating the type of structure, as sonata, fugue, symphony, nocturne.

Another and far more definite and extensive plan for suggesting a range of intellectual associations is realized in modern "program" music, as in various works of Liszt, Berlioz and Dvořák. Here a poem or other literary composition is first selected, and the music composed in harmony with it. This is entirely legitimate work, and the result is often deeply interesting and suggestive, particularly to those persons who do not easily respond to music alone; yet such a method

makes music really illustrate literature. Now no art fulfills its own function most completely when it is used to illustrate another art. Such work has its place and is helpful; but if you wished to understand painting and sculpture, you would turn to independent masterpieces in those fields, rather than to Flaxman's drawings for Homer, Botticelli's illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* or the German paintings illustrating *Faust*. So music is best understood when the art is working independently; and the development of modern program music, with a range of definite literary associations, only proves that such intellectual reflections are not given by the music alone, and accentuates the conclusions we have reached regarding the function of music.

A further method of associating definite trains of reflection with musical compositions has been developed in so-called "interpretation" of music, where a lecturer goes through a composition, associating the intellectual conceptions which to him seem appropriate with the changing appeal of the work. This is often a great help in opening the door to the appreciation of music, especially for the uninitiated.

I recall a remarkable instance of such an interpretation of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* given by no less a philosopher than Dr. Wm. T. Harris. The sonata was played over by a masterly artist, and then Dr. Harris took it up, passage by passage, and interpreted its development. Its central conflicts, he said, represented the struggle of the Titans with the gods. We could see Pelion heaped on Ossa as he proceeded, and followed with him the story until the Titans were cast into Tartarus and the gods calmly conquered in the end. It was all deeply interesting; yet if the hearer supposed Beethoven wrote the sonata to illustrate that story he would utterly misunderstand the music. A dozen other stories furnish equally good associations, as, for example, the conflict of the gods of Asgard with the Jötuns, or the struggle of Napoleon and his veterans with the snow and ice of Russia and the hosts of her barbaric population. The "interpretation" may thus suggest an interesting train of intellectual ideas to associate with the music, thus aiding especially those who find the art somewhat intangible; but if it is supposed to give the *meaning* of

the music, it is worse than useless, positively hampering a sound response to music, by substituting something else for it. Thus it should be evident why it is so much more difficult to put music into terms of the intellect than is true of the other arts. At best we can suggest intellectual associations to accompany the direct appeal of the music, but it is always a mistake to push the attempt far.

There is a further refinement in the function of music owing to the fact, already noted, that its forms are dynamic, contrasting with the statical forms of sculpture, painting and architecture. As a composition is rendered, each sound-form is freshly created, annulling those preceding and giving way to those following. Thus these forms impress the sense only momentarily, and cannot be held fixedly as in the case of the other arts. In consequence, music peculiarly sublimates its form, *the spiritual content being freed from sensuous association* more than is true of the other arts. This makes it possible for music to fulfill a unique function in relation to the life of the spirit.

This is the more significant, in that emotion, to which music appeals, is more generic and

elemental than the understanding, transcending in scope the activity of the imagination. It is possible to *conceive* what we can never *imagine,* because the imagination works wholly within the limits of the sensible world. We can, for example, conceive a world in space of two or four dimensions, and can readily construct a mathematics for such a world; but it is impossible to imagine life under such conditions. The reason is that our minds are built on the plan of space of three dimensions, and the moment we try to picture anything for the imagination, we give it length, breadth and thickness. So it is possible to conceive the existence of an immaterial soul; but when we imagine it, we usually represent it as an attentuated transparent body in space of three dimensions. This leads inevitably to absurd contradictions, as when Dante represents the immaterial soul of Virgil holding Dante and his physical body on the back of the monster Geryon. Similarly we can think the idea of an omnipresent, omniscient God, but we cannot imagine Him, and every attempt to do so ends in absurdity. That is why painting and sculpture fail so universally in their

attempts to portray the Divine. The Greek gods are satisfying because they are so human. They represent phases and attributes of man lifted to the skies. Take in contrast, one of the most wonderful of all efforts to paint God —Michael Angelo's *Creation of Adam* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Twice God said, "Let there be light": once when physical light came, and again—the greater wonder—when the human soul was born. The figure of the Divine, in this fresco, appears above, surrounded by angels, with one strange feminine figure under the arm. The right hand is stretched out, and one finger touches the finger of Adam, who lies recumbent upon the ground. Now we know what Michael Angelo meant in the portrayal of the Most High; but what has he really given for the senses and the imagination? A large, old, bearded man. That, to represent God? It is merely an absurd caricature compared to our conception of the Divine. The Adam, on the other hand, is entirely satisfying. As you look upon him, you realize that a moment ago he was the dust of the earth. The finger of God touches him, and you can almost see dawning in his face the

look of wonder, heartache, world-hunger, tragedy, that was to be human life ever after. The point is, Michael Angelo knew *man,* he had lived man, he could paint man; but when he wanted to represent God, the best he could do was to portray a man's face and body, and omit the elements more definitely human.

Poetry fails in the same way. Milton attempts in *Paradise Lost* to represent an omnipotent, omniscient God at war with part of his subjects. How impossible to imagine! You understand his conception, but the God he has painted is, for the imagination, a jealous tyrant whom you cannot respect. Milton's Adam and Eve are not vitally moving; but the great, strong, marred, Anglo-Saxon rebel Satan, who would rather "reign in hell than serve in heaven," takes powerful hold of the imagination, if you allow yourself to respond directly to the poetry. The reason is that Milton himself was a good deal like his hero, Satan; he understood that character, and hence could portray it with satisfying reality.

What is impossible to the arts picturing for the imagination is, in a different way, accomplished by music, since *music can waken in us*

the emotions we feel when we think the transcendent, the supernatural, the Divine. Think, for example, your own conception of God: you could not imagine it; no artist could paint it; but have you not heard strains of music, as for instance, in the third movement of the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven, that awaken in you the emotion you feel when you think your conception of God?

So it is possible to conceive a transcendent heaven, perfectly satisfying. No artist could paint or describe it; and the heaven of golden streets and pearly gates never can appeal to the imagination as satisfyingly as green grass, blue skies and gray seas. Have you not, however, heard music, as in the most moving portion of the love-music of *Tristan und Isolde,* that put you into just the emotional state you are in when you think your conception of a transcendent heaven of joy?

Music is thus rightly said to be "the one art capable of revealing the infinite." It does not, strictly speaking, *reveal* the infinite, but it can awaken in us the emotions associated with the conception of it. That is what Browning's Abt Vogler means in speaking of the miracle

achieved by music, as compared with the other arts:

"But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is naught;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!"

The wonder is that a series of forms in the physical world, born and dying in quick succession, can produce another series in the psychical world—a series of emotional states which we experience. How did the first series produce the second? To answer this question would be to touch the heart of the mystery of all life. Thus music stands in unique rela-

tion to the life of the spirit; the response to music is the best symbol for the deepest phases of the inner life; and Browning is right, in *Abt Vogler,* in passing from the highest experience of music to the philosophy of the soul.

From what has been said it will be evident that music is the most *personal* of the arts, searching down into the spirit and bringing to expression feelings that lie far too deep for words ever to embody them. Did you ever sit through an evening of great music, and at the end turn unconsciously to those near you, wondering if your soul had been laid bare to them as it had been to yourself? One realizes then how deeply personal are the emotions which music wakens in the appreciative hearer.

Take for illustration a typical modern composition—Wagner's *Overture to Tannhäuser.* Other arts could present the different motives. Sculpture could carve its golden Venus, painting portray its maiden Elizabeth, poetry could describe the pilgrims returning from the south; but in the music all these are given at once. In the shrill cry of passion that echoes from the vibrant strings of the violin, in the noble motif of Elizabeth, the deep tones of the pilgrim

chorus, it is as if a cross-section had been taken at a single instant of the human spirit. Man is not led now by one desire and now by another, but a thousand desires play upon the body and spirit all the time; and, until one of them has been affirmed and made a motive, the individual might move in any direction. Thus the music can take the wealth of desires and aspirations and fuse them in one great billowy ocean of sound which, as in this *Overture,* sweeps over us and seems almost to draw the breath from the body.

If music is thus the most personal of the arts, it is at the same time the most social. It is an art we enjoy together; and if all the listeners appreciate, the more there are present, the greater joy should there be for each. Music, moreover, makes its appeal to that aspect of life which unifies us. The intellect isolates, the emotions unite. Men are separated by intellectual opinion and conviction, they are united in feeling—whether it be the passion of the mob or the aspiration of humanity. Thus the spatial arts define, isolate, clarify; music fuses, sweeps, unites. This should make clear why music is at once a primi-

tive and universal art, and one expressing the utmost refinement of civilization.

Thus it is easy to see why music lends itself so readily to combination with other arts, since they may give the definite conceptions with which music associates its emotional appeal. The composite arts, which form so remarkable an expression of modern life, are reserved for discussion in a subsequent chapter (XV); meantime, let us note that their development has been made possible by the wonderful cultivation of the art of music in modern times.

Alone or in combination, music does its work, cultivating and refining the sensuous and emotional susceptibility, and thus rendering one more finely and deeply responsive to all beauty, to love, the moral ideal and religion. It may exalt one to a plane where, for a time, the ideal seems possible, and *is* more possible. Thus the marvelous, fluid, ever-growing temple of sound, surviving across the centuries in a few black marks upon a page, recreated in a liquid wonder of flowing forms by each artist anew, fulfills a wondrous function for the spirit of man, and has therefore won its place as a leading expression of modern life.

"If it is true that painting and poetry in their imitations make use of entirely different means or symbols—the first, namely, of form and color in space, the second of articulated sounds in time—if these symbols indisputably require a suitable relation to the thing symbolized, then it is clear that symbols arranged in juxtaposition can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition; while consecutive symbols can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts are themselves consecutive.

Subjects whose wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition are called bodies. Consequently, bodies with their visible properties are the peculiar subjects of painting.

Subjects whose wholes or parts are consecutive are called actions. Consequently, actions are the peculiar subject of poetry.

Still, all bodies do not exist in space only, but also in time. They endure, and in each moment of their duration may assume a different appearance, or stand in a different combination. Each of these momentary appearances and combinations is the effect of a preceding one, may be the cause of a subsequent one, and is therefore, as it were, the centre of an action. Consequently, painting too can imitate actions, but only indicatively, by means of bodies.

On the other hand, actions cannot exist by themselves, they must depend on certain beings. So far, therefore, as these beings are bodies, or are regarded as such, poetry paints bodies, but only indicatively, by means of actions.

In its coexisting compositions painting can only make use of a single instant of the action, and must therefore choose the one which is most pregnant, and from which what precedes and what follows can be most easily gathered.

In like manner, poetry, in its progressive imitations, is confined to the use of a single property of bodies, and must therefore choose that which calls up the most sensible image of the body in the aspect in which she makes use of it."—Lessing, *Laokoön*, pp. 91, 92.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF POETRY: THE RELATION OF POETRY TO SCULPTURE AND PAINTING

WE have found Music, presenting its dynamic series of sound forms in time relation, strikingly contrasting in function with sculpture and painting, the arts portraying forms in space relations. We turn now to the third great type of ideal art, literature, studied in its highest aspect, poetry. There is a more bewildering wealth of material in this art than in all the others, and, as we shall see, the widest range of functions. Perhaps these can be made evident most quickly if we begin by comparing poetry with the arts previously studied, and first with sculpture.

Let it be noted that poetry can carve its marble statues, though with less power and by other methods than sculpture. It can express definite conceptions for the intellect, through spatial forms given for the imagination. Let

us take a great example in one of Shelley's most powerful sonnets:

OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT

"I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Let us omit, for the present, the element of music in the poem, and consider only what is carved and painted for the imagination. The ruined statue is given here, no less truly than in sculpture, though for the inner vision, and with less smiting impressiveness than if one stood in the desolate sand-waste beside the legs of stone, with the shattered head lying near.

It is given, however, not by the combination of the forms in space for the eye, but through the enumeration of a series of characteristic traits in time succession. Thus the imagination of the reader must coöperate actively in fusing these traits in one, in order to see the statue and its setting with the inner vision. That is why the success of the descriptive poem depends upon the wise choice of characteristic traits and suggestive epithets and images, which enable the reader to see the picture as a whole with the imagination. Wise restraint on the poet's part is necessary, since too many traits and images confuse and obscure the vision. Thus Shelley's genius is evident in the choice here: "vast" and "trunkless" "legs of stone"; a "shattered" visage, with "frown" and "wrinkled lip" and "sneer of cold command": these most significant traits and suggestive epithets are just enough powerfully to stimulate the imagination to the vision of the ruined statue. So in portraying the setting: "boundless" and "bare," the "lone" and "level" sands "stretch far away": one seems really to stand in the sand waste and look out over the majestic desolation.

Poetry must therefore depend upon association and suggestion for its carrying power in description; and one mark of a great poet is the ability to choose powerfully visualizing epithets and images. Homer's traditional greatness, for example, results in no small measure from his preëminent possession of this quality—"ox-eyed Juno," "rosy-fingered Dawn," "blue-eyed Pallas," "earth-shaking Neptune," "swift-footed Iris," "cloud-compelling Zeus," "far-darting Apollo," "golden Aphrodite": the atmosphere of the *Iliad* depends much upon these wonderfully suggestive epithets.

It was this fact that poetry must present its traits of form in time succession, while sculpture and painting combine them in space relations, that Lessing hit upon in the *Laokoön,* though his interpretation was faulty. He concluded, from this contrast, that the business of sculpture and painting was to portray *bodies* in space, while poetry should present *actions* in time. The view is illuminating, and was especially so to that fresh awakening of German art in which Lessing was so great an inspiration; yet the conclusion goes beyond the

mark. The spatial arts can represent action, sometimes most powerfully, as in Meissonier's great painting previously studied; but only by portraying bodies in space at a significant moment of action. So poetry can present bodies, but only through a series of suggestive traits given in time succession. Thus Lessing was right as to the main business of the two types of art; but each reaches over into the field of the other far more than he was aware; and while description, or the portrayal of bodies in space, is not the chief function of poetry, it is a most significant element, accomplished by the method we have shown.

We experience sensuous pleasure in seeing, with the inner vision, what Shelley has carved and painted for us; but this pleasure is less direct and strong than with sculpture, where the forms and colors are given for the actual physical vision. On the other hand, just because the sensuous response is more subtle and indirect, the spiritual content in poetry is less bound to sensuous associations than is the case in sculpture and painting, while the æsthetic satisfaction in the adequacy and harmony with

which the conceptions are expressed, is as great certainly as in the case of the other arts.

With the limitation in its power to present forms in space, as compared with sculpture, poetry has a complementary greatness in directly associating with these forms a wide range of thoughts and emotions, thus interpreting them in terms of the human spirit. Sculpture gives us the statue, and we make of it what we can. Poetry, less powerfully and directly, gives us the statue, and *associates its interpretation in terms of human thought and feeling.* When Shelley says of the shattered face:

> "Whose frown
> And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
> Which yet survive stamped on these lifeless things,
> The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed,"

we know fully the impression made by the fallen statue on Shelley's mind and heart, and we share his experience. So with the irony of the inscription in relation to the fallen statue and desolate sand waste: we are made to feel the tragic vanity of the great king's arrogance in imagining that his works would be the de-

spair of subsequent tyrants, while only the ruin of his own statue faintly records his otherwise forgotten name.

As indicated in this study of Shelley's sonnet, poetry can paint its picture as well as carve its statue. Let us take an example of pure descriptive poetry at its best—one of Wordsworth's finest sonnets:

UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Sept. 3, 1802.

"Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,—
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

To make clear the comparison with painting, think what Corot would have done with this scene. He would have given us in one painting the whole sleeping city, with the sunlight and atmosphere over it, seen from a single view-point, in one moment of time—the different elements being combined in a unity in space relations. He would have burned the scene in on the imagination, through the physical vision, with a power greater even than Wordsworth's; yet the poet succeeds in painting the picture, through the succession of forms suggested for the imagination, which must fuse these in one scene. Indeed, Wordsworth even ventures upon a catalogue—a dangerous device in poetry—even Homer nods when he attempts to catalogue the ships for Ilium; yet here the enumeration of "ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples," gives just those big elements of the picture necessary to visualizing it as a whole.

If less pregnant than Shelley's in giving vital concrete traits, Wordsworth's sonnet is wider in its use of suggestive association. Compare the city wearing "like a garment" the "beauty of the morning"; the various aspects

of the city "silent, bare" "open unto the fields, and to the sky," "all bright and glittering in the smokeless air." How these descriptive words and phrases carry the atmosphere of the scene and stimulate the imagination to realize it as a whole. So with the river gliding "at his own sweet will," in implied contrast with the week days, when the river is dominated by human traffic; and the "very houses" asleep, with the "mighty heart" of the city "lying still," in strange contrast to the usual restless activity of the city: one gets the very mood of its impression on this beautiful Sunday morning.

The beauty of the picture, painted by the poem with the coöperation of the reader's inner vision, gives keen sensuous pleasure, as well as æsthetic delight, which springs also from the harmony in the expression of the thought and mood. More than in Shelley's sonnet, there is here direct expression of both thought and emotion, through the *interpretation* of the scene in its impression on Wordsworth's own senses, mind and heart.

> "Dull would he be who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty,"

gives the poet's own view as to what man's relations to such a scene should be. Then the contrast, suggested in a few brief touches, with the nature world, to which we usually turn for the beauty of calm repose; affirming the sleeping city as equally beautiful in the radiance of the sunlight, and even more peaceful, in ironic opposition to its usual mood: all this is interpretation of the given picture in terms of the human spirit.

Let me take, as a third illustration, a bit of my own work that happens to contain elements of both sculpture and painting. On the bold front of a mountain in the Franconia notch, in New Hampshire, looks out the stern profile of a human face—not a mere freak of nature, but majestic beyond what one could believe beforehand, and worthy to have been chiseled by the hand of God. It and its setting form the theme in the following:

THE GREAT STONE FACE

Stern, grave and silent, majestically he broods
Above the lake and forests stretched below;
Not answering to the call of human voices
That, shallow in laughter, or deep in awestruck
tones,

Sound o'er the lake and wake the echoing hills;
Projecting from the mountain's naked front,
As reaching out to meet on equal terms
And with a calmer strength the onrushing storms.
Harsh as the granite of the mountain heights,
Yet smoothed as by the flow of living waters
That round the boulders on the eternal slopes;
Gigantic in the strength of even brow
And long, firm nose above the hard, rude chin;
Yet open lips, just parted, wonderingly,
As with the eternal question, ever asked
But never answered by the mind of man;
The suppressed tenderness but gathering force
From the hard strength that drives all feeling back:
Inexorable Nature in the pitiless calm,
Human in depth and might of life reserved,
As hungering to break the eternal silence
In one great, wild, all-voicing human cry.
Such is the face! Gaze and be silent, Man,
And learn that in this mystic sculpturing
Of the Almighty Hand, are fused in one
The two supreme, unanswered mysteries—
Nature and Man, revealed but unexplained.

The face is chiseled, but less directly and impressively than in sculpture. The environing nature world is pictured, but less powerfully than in painting. Instead of giving the

different forms fused in space relations, in one moment of time, the poem must carve the face and paint the picture by a succession of forms given in time relation. The descriptive epithets and phrases not only aid the imagination to visualize the objects portrayed, but add the association of human thought and emotion. Finally, the poem gives the direct interpretation of the face and its surroundings in terms of the spirit of man.

Turning again for a moment to Lessing's view of the relation of poetry to sculpture and painting, we should now be able to see clearly at once its value and faults. In sculpture and painting the aim is, as Lessing saw, to portray objective forms and colors directly for the eye, and through these to give concepts for the intellect; while (though in larger measure than Lessing realized) action and the development of a story can be represented only by choosing a significant moment of the action. In poetry the description of objects is not an *end,* and so far Lessing was right; it is, however, a legitimate *means,* the aim being to give and interpret the object or scene, in terms of human thought and feeling, and by the less direct

method of a succession of traits and associations given in time relation. Thus without in any degree taking the place of sculpture and painting, or fulfilling their specific functions, poetry does reach over into the field of those arts, combining something of their functions with purposes of its own.

Let us compare the treatment of the same theme in the two contrasting types of art. In the modern gallery at Florence is a painting by Castagnola representing Fra Lippo Lippi making love to the novice, Lucrezia Buti, who served as his model for the frescoes at Prato. The girl, in convent garb, is seated in a chair. The painter has turned toward her from his easel and half-finished picture. She draws back half-frightened, yet fascinated; in her face is portrayed the struggle between the old life, with its vows, habits and training, and the flood of new life that surges up into consciousness and takes possession of her above her will. No poem could give that one psychological moment, with all it carries of past and future, so powerfully as does this painting.

Browning's dramatic monologue of *Fra Lippo Lippi* cannot bring home the one situa-

tion to the physical vision, and through it to the intellect, with the same reality; yet in the poem, the painter, surprised by the night watch as he is sneaking home from some merry rendezvous to the hospitable prison of the Medicean palace, tells the whole story of his life. He narrates the main incidents of his career from childhood onward, giving his relation to the cloister, his view of art, a suggestive description of certain of his paintings, and the heart of his character and attitude toward life. Thus, with far less smiting power in giving directly for the physical sense, and through it for the intellect, one moment of the painter's life, the poem gives a vastly wider view of Fra Lippo, of his epoch and his relation to art and life in all time.

In the Metropolitan gallery in New York, among other beautiful landscape paintings, is an *October Afternoon* by J. Francis Murphy. It is all in soft yellows. The trees are still; the leaves are golden upon them and upon the ground. The moment chosen is the one when Nature flames forth in her loveliest garment before the gray white sleep of the winter time. One dreams of the summer that is gone and

anticipates the chill that is soon coming. That moment, with the conceptions it involves, is given perfectly in the painting, and the mood one brings is naturally associated.

Compare with this the following sonnet of Shakespeare's—to my mind the most beautiful ever written in the freer English form:

"That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang:

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest:

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by:

—This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long."

Three pictures are painted in the three quatrains severally. Each is beautiful, clear

to the inner vision, done through a few most skillfully suggested traits. How far short each of these pictures falls of the actual painting for the outer eye; yet the traits given carry a definite thought and mood, and interpret what they give to the imagination. Finally, the last two lines interpret the autumn, the twilight, the dying fire upon the hearth, in terms of the deepest experiences of the human heart, thus making the three pictures a symbolic language for life and love.

"Form without substance is a shadow of riches, and all possible cleverness in expression is of no use to him who has nothing to express."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 239.

"Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity,—I mean the true simplicity of a rightly and nobly ordered mind and character, not that other simplicity which is only an euphuism for folly."—Plato, *Republic*, book III, section 400.

"In instruments, the primal organs of creation and nature find their representation; they cannot be sharply determined and defined, for they but repeat primal feelings as they came forth from the chaos of the first creation, when there were perhaps no human beings in existence to receive them in their hearts. With the genius of the human voice it is entirely otherwise; this represents the human heart, and its isolated, individual emotion. Its character is therefore limited, but fixed and defined. Let these two elements be brought together, then; let them be united! Let those wild primal emotions that stretch out into the infinite, that are represented by instruments, be contrasted with the clear, definite emotions of the human heart, represented by the human voice. The addition of the second element will work beneficently and soothingly upon the conflict of the elemental emotions, and give to their course a well-defined and united channel; and the human heart itself, in receiving these elemental emotions, will be immeasurably strengthened and broadened; and made capable of feeling clearly what was before an uncertain presage of the highest ideal, now changed into a divine knowledge." —Wagner, in "A Pilgrimage to Beethoven," *Art Life and Theories*, p. 63.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF POETRY: THE RELATION OF POETRY TO MUSIC

SO far we have been studying poetry in comparison with sculpture and painting; let us turn now to its relation to the other great type of art—music. All the poems studied in the preceding chapter have a direct musical appeal; in fact, the direct sensuous effect of poetry is to the physical hearing. All poetry is meant to be read aloud, and must be so read to have its full effect; yet, even when read silently, we get the music for the inner hearing, just as we get the vision by the imagination. Read either way, silently or aloud, we must first get the words as sound forms *before* we can see the images with the inner vision. Thus the kinship of poetry to music is even closer than to the spatial arts. In fact, all the elements of music are present in each of the poems studied. Rhythm is evident in carefully measured meter; melody is clearly

present in the ordered rise and fall of accented and unaccented syllables, in the diction, the variations of movement, and the modulations of the voice; while even technical harmony, if rightly defined as the consonance or concord of sounds occurring simultaneously *or in quick succession,* is evident in rhyme, phases of meter and stanza-form, to the extent to which it is used in the singing of a single voice. Even timbre is present in the general quality of the music in a poem as a whole.

In Shelley's *Ozymandias of Egypt* the diction is strong, sonorous, masculine, harmonizing with the majesty of the description. The meter is iambic—as we have seen, the simplest form in English, with only an occasional variation of accent at the beginning of a line and a few three-syllable feet in the whole. The rhyme is somewhat irregular as compared with the strict sonnet form, but close enough to unify the whole in thought. The five-foot lines flow regularly, in stately harmony with the conceptions given.

There is direct sensuous pleasure in the response to the musical appeal, though less than with an equally great composition of music.

Keen æsthetic satisfaction is given by the harmony between the music and the spiritual content it embodies. A generic mood is awakened in the reader; but with this the poem directly associates a range of forms and pictures for the imagination, and of definite conceptions and reflections for the intellect, thus passing beyond the scope and function of the art of music.

All the elements of musical appeal, studied in Shelley's sonnet, are present equally in Wordsworth's *Upon Westminster Bridge.* Here the strict Italian sonnet form is observed, the thought being divided in harmony with it —the first eight lines describing the city, while the last six compare it with nature and give the interpretation of the whole. The meter, again iambic, moves with stately regularity, the variations at the beginning of certain lines (as the first, second and ninth) serving to emphasize important words. The diction is less severely majestic and more softly melodious than in Shelley's sonnet, thus appropriately carrying the mood of peace which the poem contains. The rhyme-sounds, closely integrated, are especially melodious.

With the sensuous and æsthetic pleasure, given by the music and its harmony with the content, the poem expresses a definite mood of peace, and awakes the corresponding emotional state in the hearer or reader. Thus the poem goes over into the field of music and fulfills directly something of the function of that art; but with the emotional appeal of the music, how vital is the range of associated images and reflections, interpreted in terms of the spirit of man.

The direct musical appeal of poetry is sufficiently strong to give some emotional effect when a poem is read aloud in a language we do not understand. Let Sappho's *Ode to Aphrodite* be read to one ignorant of Greek: could the hearer fail to respond to the beauty of the liquid music, and could he fail to get, from the music alone, something of the general mood of the poem? Would not the dirge-like lines of Freiligrath's *O lieb', so lang du lieben kannst** awaken the mood of tender sadness even in one ignorant of German? So when Dante's Francesca sobs,

"Amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona,"

* For an English translation see the author's *Book of Meditations*, pp. 64, 65.

it is "like the murmuring of doves in immemorial elms," as a critic has said, trying to echo in his harsher English the moaning melody of the original. No one could listen to Francesca's lines without some emotional response, even if the Italian words meant nothing to him.

The musical element in poetry is so significant that there are many poems in which it makes the primary and stronger appeal, as for instance in the following burst of Elizabethan love song:

DIAPHENIA

"Diaphenia like the daffadowndilly,
White as the sun, fair as the lily,
Heigh ho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are beloved of their dams;
How blest were I if thou wouldst prove me.

Diaphenia like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,
Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power;
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.

Diaphenia like to all things blesséd
When all thy praises are expresséd,
Dear joy, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the spring,
Or the bees their careful king:
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me!" *

This is an outpouring of pure melody comparable to a bird song. The emotion is so exultant and exuberant that it breaks out in most exquisitely irregular metrical form. Try to scan a stanza, and you find dactyls, trochees, spondees and even iambic feet in the measure, poured out with an abandon; yet every variation in the measure quickening the movement, emphasizing pregnant words, or otherwise adding to the beautiful artistry by which the mood of the poem finds expression. As we have seen, classic scansion applies poorly to English verse; but the names of the feet are of no consequence: the significance is in the determination of the melody by the relation of accented to unaccented syllables.

* Constable, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, pp. 9, 10, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1888.

Dĭăphĕne / nĭă / lĭke thĕ / dăffădŏwn / dĭllў,
Whĭte ăs thĕ / sŭn / făir ăs thĕ / lĭlў,
Heĭgh hŏ, / hŏw Ĭ dŏ / lŏve thee!
Ĭ dŏ / lŏve thĕe / ăs mў / lăms
Ăre bĕ / lŏvĕd / ŏf thĕir / dăms;
Hŏw blĕst / wĕre Ĭ / ĭf thŏu / woŭld'st prŏve mĕ.

Is not the poem just a burst of song; and does not its music waken in the hearer the very mood of springtime, early morning sunlight and the awakening of youthful love?

A greater example of poetry that is primarily music, is given in Shelley's wonderful, melodious lyric,

To the Night

"Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray
Star-inwrought;
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day,

Kiss her until she be wearied out:
Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sigh'd for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turn'd to his rest
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sigh'd for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmur'd like a noon-tide bee
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—and I replied
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovéd night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!"

Here the dominant appeal of Shelley is through music to the emotions, as in his *Ozymandias of Egypt* it is through imagery to the inner vision and the intellect. Is it not significant that one poet should have written both? In the lyric *To the Night* the imagery is vague, dreamy, suggestive, not intended to produce clear pictures for the imagination. If one attempts definitely to visualize it, the effect is almost ludicrous. Try it with the first two stanzas. Note, too, that "Day" is made feminine in the second stanza, masculine in the third! This produces no jar, however, because the Day is so vaguely personified. The point is that the value of the imagery is, here, not in giving definite pictures for the inner vision, but in suggestion and color associated with the dominant mood.

On the other hand, what liquid, limpid music the poem is! The diction is full of open vowel sounds: *noon, soon, boon, sweet, sleep, murmured*—such words give the key to the music. Two-syllable and three-syllable feet are used varyingly in the poem, with many dactyls—the most musical foot in English. Note the liquid flow of the first three dactylic lines in

stanza one, and then the slowing down of the movement in the regular iambic lines, four, five and six, with the peculiar impressiveness of the two short lines, two and seven, made each of a dactyl and an accented syllable. In several of the following stanzas these two lines are still briefer, consisting of three syllables, two of which are accented. The student will find it worth while to go through the poem line by line, noting the musical effects and how they are produced; and let him remember that *there are no accidents in art.* Finally, the long seven line stanza is closely integrated by the almost monotonous music of the rhyme, the scheme of which is *a b a b c c b.* Thus the music returns back into itself, closing the passage of melody at the end of each stanza.

Since the appeal of this lyric is so dominately musical, let us compare its effect with that of a cognate work in the art of music, such as a nocturne of Chopin's. Both compositions present a series of sound forms in time succession, based on the principles of rhythm, melody and harmony; but the nocturne is pure sound forms, while the lyric associates with these plastic forms for the inner vision. The sound

forms in both compositions give direct sensuous pleasure; but this is more powerful and unmixed in the music, while the poem adds the less direct sensuous delight in the forms molded for the imagination. In both, is the same type of æsthetic satisfaction in the adequacy and harmony with which the spiritual content is expressed. The lyric, like the nocturne, tends to waken a dominant mood in the hearer and, beneath this, to carry him through a series of vaguely defined emotional states. The music does this far more powerfully, however, with more clearly defined emotions; but the poem associates, with the feelings awakened, a range of ideas and reflections for the intellect, and interprets both the thought and the emotion in terms of Shelley's experience and, therefore, of the life of man. Thus the poem unites something of the function of sculpture and painting with something of the function of music in a new unity, more complex and many-sided in its expression of the human spirit.

This is so true that we can find characteristic painter poets and singer poets—the one appealing primarily through imagery to the inner vision, the other through music to the ear. All

poetry uses, of course, both appeals, and in the greatest poetry they are combined in harmony; but now one, now the other, may be dominant. Thus, with all his melody, Dante visualizes first and sings afterward; Milton dominantly makes sonorous music, and subordinately paints for the imagination. So Browning is of the seers, Tennyson of the singers; Shakespeare primarily creates for the imagination and intellect, Spenser molds harmonious melodies for the ear.

To note how far the contrast may go, take a characteristic passage from the *Faerie Queene,* describing the descent of a spirit to the house of Morpheus to bring up a dream. Please note how difficult the situation itself is to imagine, while the description of the house of Morpheus is even ludicrous if you try, as you should not, to visualize it:

"He, making speedy way through spersed ayre,
And through the world of waters wide and deepe,
To Morpheus house doth hastily repaire.
Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,
And low, where dawning day doth never peepe,
His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe

In silver deaw his ever-drouping hed,
Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spred.

. . . . . .

And unto Morpheus comes, whom drowned deepe
In drowsie fit he findes; of nothing he takes keepe.

And, more to lulle him in his slumber soft,
A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,
And ever-drizling raine upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did caste him in a swowne.
No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
As still are wont t'annoy the walled towne,
Might there be heard: but carelesse Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enimyes." *

Try to realize the imagery, and note its utter inconsistency. The dwelling is in the bowels of the earth, where day never dawns; yet the dew is falling, the sea washes the bed of Morpheus; apparently the moon is shining while the rain is falling, a stream is tumbling down, a murmuring wind is making a sound like that of swarming bees! The effect is ludicrous if

* Spenser, *Faerie Queene,* book I, Canto I.

one attempts to fuse the different images in a single picture; yet, here, that is just what one should not do. Spenser has gathered together all the images suggestive of sleep, woven them loosely together, and subordinated the whole to the wonderful slumbrous music of the passage. Note the sound of the words: *lull, slumber, streame, down, rain, murmuring, swarming, sowne, swowne, towne*—they are all characteristic of the melody achieved through the regular, peacefully moving lines and the long, close, harmonious rhyme scheme.

Poetry is thus the widest of the fine arts in function, combining in a new union something of the work of the two great contrasting types of art, without usurping the place of either. Hence poetry is the most universal and many-sided of the arts, in relation to the human spirit and in the interpretation of life. Lyric poetry can give a series of connected emotions and reflections revealing the life of the personal spirit. The epic may portray a varied range of characters and narrate a succession of actions, interpreting both in relation to the whole life of man. The drama presents human beings in action and relation, on the stage of

time, in the whole working out of character and conduct in relation to the laws of life.

Prose, too, set in a lower key and therefore with less restraint, can accomplish the same ends. If less exalted in artistic form than poetry, it is therefore often wider in scope. The novel is an epic-drama, lowered in key, but more complex in relation to life. Prose has, too, its rhythms and melodies: to realize this, one need but compare the organ-like music of De Quincey—where passage after passage, by changing an occasional word, can be scanned as iambic blank verse—with the music of a North Sea storm one hears in Carlyle's prose, with three accented monosyllables frequently occurring together. The contrast of seer and singer holds with prose writers as with poets: compare the constant picture making of Victor Hugo, with the subtly tender melody—the imagery constantly subordinated—in the exquisite prose of Pierre Loti. Thus all the functions of poetry are fulfilled in prose as well; and our study has dealt chiefly with poetry only because it is the highest form of literature, in which the functions of the art can be most clearly seen.

It may help to clarify and fix our view of the respective functions of the great types of art if we take a few closing comparisons, considering first the treatment of the same theme in the different arts. In Fitzgerald's rendering of Omar Khayyám occur the following stanzas:

"I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered 'I Myself am Heaven and Hell:'

Heaven but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire." *

Vedder has illustrated these on one page. Above, at the left, he has drawn a radiant face on a background of light; below, at the right, a face of agony on a background of flame and darkness; between them is a figure representing the soul, with the symbolic swirl of life. The conceptions of the faces of joy and pain

* *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám, Fitzgerald's translation, stanzas LXVI and LXVII.

are given directly through the sense of sight and burned in on the imagination with a vital intensity poetry cannot equal.

What could music give of the same theme? The answer is found in Liza Lehmann's *In a Persian Garden*—not to look further. Music can give the mood of heaven and the mood of hell, awakening the emotional state we associate with the one and the other conception, with a power unequaled in any other art.

The two stanzas of the poem give the conceptions, less powerfully and directly for the eye than in the drawing; unite with these the direct sensuous and emotional appeal of the grave music of the poem, less impressively than in the art of music; and add the interpretation of the whole in terms of human thought and feeling.

Compare the fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno* with Watts's painting of *Paolo and Francesca,* and with the love music of *Tristan und Isolde.* Watts paints the lovers clinging together, swirling onward on the black air of hell. The two faces and bodies, in the eternal instant, are given with a direct smiting power no other art can equal; yet our feelings in the presence of

the painting are not determined by its conceptions, but by our experience and knowledge of life.

The love music of *Tristan und Isolde* sweeps us on to the bosom of the sea of emotion, melts us with the tenderness of love and longing, clutches us with the mood of Fate, with a commanding power no other art can equal; yet many love-stories besides Isolde's and Francesca's might be associated with the music.

In Dante's canto the two lovers are painted sweeping toward him on the purple air. They stop at the call of love, and Francesca moans out her story. The whole narration is given. The verse first pains with discordant words and bitter images, and then sobs with the music of Francesca's sighed-out story, as though with a moan of the universe over the bitterness of fate. The whole life story is given, the music of the verse is associated with it; while, through the effect upon Dante's thought and feeling, the meaning of the whole in relation to human life is interpreted.

If the student cares to go further, let him compare Michael Angelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel with Dante's *Divine Comedy,* and these with a fugue of Bach's and a symphony

of Beethoven's; or let him compare Cormon's *Cain* with Wagner's music to the *Götterdämmerung,* and these with Shakespeare's *King Lear.*

In each instance the spatial arts are most powerful in rendering conceptions in statical form for the eye and the imagination; music excels all other arts in the sweeping appeal through dynamic forms to the ear and the emotions; while poetry unites something of both types of appeal in a new complex whole, interpreted in terms of human thought and feeling.

With this differentiation in function it is impossible to say that any one art is the highest: each is supreme in its own way and in its own service to the spirit of man. One may prefer roses to lilies, or violets to roses, but one cannot say that any one of these is the most beautiful of flowers. So one may be drawn most deeply by a particular art, but one must recognize that this means only a special responsiveness to the function of that art, and not at all that the art is to be ranked above the others objectively. Each is highest in its own field, and all are needed to express and interpret fully the life of man.

"We leave a grand musical performance with our feelings excited, the reading of a noble poem with a quickened imagination, a beautiful statue or building with an awakened understanding; but a man would not choose an opportune moment who attempted to invite us to abstract thinking after a high musical enjoyment, or to attend to a prosaic affair of common life after a high poetical enjoyment, or to kindle our imagination and astonish our feelings directly after inspecting a fine statue or edifice. The reason of this is, that music, *by its matter*, even when most spiritual, presents a greater affinity with the senses than is permitted by aesthetic liberty; it is because even the most happy poetry, having *for its medium* the arbitrary and contingent play of the imagination, always shares in it more than the intimate necessity of the really beautiful allows; it is because the best sculpture touches on severe science *by what is determinate in its conception.* However, these particular affinities are lost in proportion as the works of these three kinds of art rise to a greater elevation, and it is a natural and necessary consequence of their perfection, that, without confounding their objective limits, the different arts come to resemble each other more and more, in the action *which they exercise on the mind.* At its highest degree of ennobling, music ought to become a form, and act on us with the calm power of an antique statue; in its most elevated perfection, the plastic art ought to become music and move us by the immediate action exercised on the mind by the senses; in its most complete development, poetry ought both to stir us powerfully like music and like plastic art to surround us with a peaceful light. In each art, the perfect style consists exactly in knowing how to remove specific limits, while sacrificing at the same time the particular advantages of the art, and to give it by a wise use of what belongs to it specially a more general character."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, pp. 90, 91.

CHAPTER XV

THE UNITY OF THE ARTS

IN striving to see clearly the specific function of each of the arts, we must beware of forgetting that the human spirit is, after all, a unity, and therefore every expression of it is a unity. Thus whatever element may be dominant in a work of art, the appeal is to the whole human spirit, so that what is explicit and definite in one type of art will be found to be implicit and subordinate in the contrasting type. In sculpture and painting we have found the conceptions given, the emotions associated by the observer; in music, the direct appeal is to the emotions, while the intellectual reflections are associated by the hearer; in poetry, both conceptions and emotions are expressed in harmony. In the spatial arts, form is statical and relatively permanent; in music, the sound forms are given in a dynamic and evanescent series; in poetry, the forms occur in a dynamic but permanent series. All the

arts give sensuous pleasure: in sculpture and painting this is through the physical vision; in music, by the sense of hearing; poetry appeals to both sight and hearing, but less immediately, and, with vision at least, only through the imagination. All the arts give æsthetic satisfaction and from the same cause—the adequate and harmonious expression, in different ways, of the spiritual content in appropriate form.

Thus the same elements are present in some measure in all the arts. *Form* in sculpture and painting is represented in music by rhythm and harmony, in poetry, by the meter, the stanza-form and the organization of thought. *Color* in the spatial arts may be compared to melody and timbre in music, to modulations of the voice, accent, rhyme and the melody of words in poetry. Such comparisons are seductive and may easily be carried too far—to the point of obscuring the unique function of each art. They help us to see, however, that while each art fulfills its own function, unequaled by any other, there is great unity among the arts, and all alike appeal to the whole spirit of man.

There is deep significance in the fact that

all the arts are alike *expressions* of the human spirit. Plato, toward the close of the *Republic,* in one of those errors, as illuminating as his insights, argues that art is but "an imitation of an imitation." * The abstract idea, he holds, is the reality. The form in nature is but an imperfect copy of this; while the artist's imitation of nature is doubly removed from reality. So Homer and similar artists, Plato holds, apparently with some reluctance, must be excluded from the ideal state. Sound enough the view is if art be merely imitation; but how if we recognize it to be *creative expression* through which alone the idea can be realized? The intellect must strive for abstract conceptions, in the effort to discover the unifying type behind the individuals given in nature; but the abstract concept is barren until it is given creative expression in some concrete form. We strive to go beyond *men* and arrive at the abstract conception, *man;* but this idea is vitally realized only when it is incarnated in a Faust, a Hamlet or an Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Plato's own artistic portrayal of the one good man, Socrates, in the *Apology, Crito*

* Plato, *Republic,* book X.

and *Phædo,* is vastly more effective than his relatively barren "pure idea of the Good." So Goethe's Helena means far more than any abstract conception of beauty; Browning's Caponsacchi, than any idea of manhood; the women of Shakespeare, than any theoretic ideal of womanhood. There is a fundamental quarrel here between the metaphysicians and the artists: the one seeking truth in intellectual abstractions from life, the other striving to attain it in creative expression in living form. I am with the artists in this conflict. The only road to the infinite is the finite; the ideal is real only when the effort is made to express it in some concrete action. Thus the glory of art is that it is not imitation, but creative expression in concrete form, through which alone great ideals and conceptions can be achieved for the mind and spirit of man. The paradox is that Plato—the poet among philosophers—fulfills in the *Dialogues* the very function of the art he discredits and fails to understand, in that he presents truth in the form and color of life, from the view-points of the minds beholding it.

The unity of the arts is evident, not only in

the elements common to them all, but in the way they can be combined into composite arts, more complex in appeal. Let it be noted that, wherever such combination occurs, each art must concede something, now one sacrificing more, now another. Song is an excellent example of composite art, where music and poetry are united in a new appeal. Usually poetry makes the sacrifice in current singing, for the words are so mumbled that they might as well be given in a foreign language—as is frequently done. In certain forms of church music, on the other hand, the words are chanted with reasonable clearness, while the music is subordinated.

Where song is at its best, both poetry and music are given so that the ideas of the poem are definitely associated with the series of emotional states aroused by the music. One of the most perfect examples of this composite art is Schumann's wonderful song-cycle, *Frauenliebe und Leben,* written to the poem of Chamisso. Here the critical moments of the woman's life—the courtship, betrothal, wedding, the child's coming, the separation through death—are taken, beautifully ren-

dered in the poetry, while the interpretation by the music is in simply perfect harmony. Such a composite art goes beyond either of its components in appeal, yet the attention is divided, so that even here each art must sacrifice something of its independent effect. Song, let it be noted, is peculiarly adapted to the purposes of religion, since the emotional appeal of music may put the hearer into an earnestly receptive mood, while the poem or words sung may, at the same time, give definite ethical and religious conceptions.

The acted drama is a still more composite art. Poetry is present in the lines spoken, painting in the scenic background, while sculpture is carried into living action in the poses and movements of the actors. The result is a most absorbing complex appeal. The need of the modern spirit has carried us one step further. The most remarkable of all composite arts is the music drama as developed by Wagner. Here are present all the arts combined in the drama, with music in addition, making the most powerful appeal of all. Thus sculpture, painting, poetry, dramatic action, orchestric dancing and music all unite in this

complex art in one manifold appeal to the whole spirit of man.

Perhaps the study we have made may help us to solve a long-continued controversy regarding the music drama. Wagner held that in it poetry and dramatic action constituted the center, while music was associated; most of his enthusiastic disciples have held, and still hold, that music is the center, with the other arts subordinated to it. Now, chronologically, vague states of feeling precede clear intelligence; but, *logically,* perception or conception always precedes emotion. Dante and Spinoza were right in alike holding this. Definitely to love or hate anything, we must first perceive or conceive it. On the other hand, while the emotional "affect" follows the perception or conception, it is far more deeply moving. Thus while poetry and dramatic action are logically prior in the music drama, and therefore central, as Wagner taught, the musical effect is vastly more powerful. This is so true that when one is intimately familiar with a Wagnerian opera, one often prefers to close one's eyes, and hear the music, undistracted by appeals to the vision.

Just because the emotional appeal is the most moving, music generally loses less than the other arts when in combination with them. Does this not mean that, whatever art is central in the combination, music will be dominant? If so, it is not difficult to see what will be possible in "the music of the future," or rather, the composite art of the future. It is certain that each art must sacrifice something when in combination with others, but when music is constantly present, there must probably be a greater subordination of the other arts to music than Wagner thought necessary.

Let me add that the music drama is an interesting illustration of the law of evolution from a homogeneous basis, through differentiation, to unity on a higher plane. Out of the generic basis in a single act of early Greek worship the fine arts have been severally developed, to be brought again into composite union in the music drama—the art peculiarly expressive of the complex needs of modern civilization. There is ample room for all the arts and for all possible combinations of them, in answering the manifold needs of the human spirit.

"You do ill if you praise, but worse if you censure, what you do not rightly understand."—Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci's Note-Books*, arranged by Edward McCurdy, p. 58.

"It is therefore not going far enough to say that the light of the understanding only deserves respect when it reacts on the character; to a certain extent it is from the character that this light proceeds; for the road that terminates in the head must pass through the heart. Accordingly, the most pressing need of the present time is to educate the sensibility, because it is the means, not only to render efficacious in practice the improvement of ideas, but to call this improvement into existence."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 48.

"It is our actors, singers, and musicians upon whose own instincts all hope for the attainment of artistic objects must rest, even when these objects themselves may be incomprehensible to them. For they must be the ones to whom these objects will most speedily become clear, as soon as their own artistic instincts are put upon the right path toward their recognition."—Wagner, *Art Life and Theories*, p. 231.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DANGERS OF ART

ART can readily be misused, and there are certain dangers even in great art, inseparable from its very nature and the methods it employs. Throughout our discussion the element of sensuous beauty has been emphasized; it is deeply significant, but as a means rather than an end. *The appeal of all art is to the senses, but through the senses to the soul.* If then the artist forgets the soul and appeals only to the senses, the danger is that the sensuous may pass over into the sensual, art degenerating into a mere pandering to the caprices of the sense life. Symonds recognized this in a pregnant passage in his discussion of the Italian renaissance:

"On the very threshold of the matter I am bound to affirm my conviction that the spiritual purists of all ages—the Jews, the iconoclasts of Byzantium, Savonarola, and our Puritan ancestors—were jus-

tified in their mistrust of plastic art. The spirit of Christianity and the spirit of figurative art are opposed, not because such art is immoral, but because it cannot free itself from sensuous associations." *

The only fault here is in limiting the statement to plastic art, but the danger is clearly evident there. It is possible to make of a painting a mere debauch of color, of a partially draped statue, a wholly sensual appeal. Goethe has given a most illuminating study of the problem in the Witches' Kitchen scene in *Faust.* The *Vision in the Mirror,* beheld by Faust, is the representation of what Goethe regards as the most beautiful form in nature —the ideal woman body and face. It appears in the Witches' Kitchen because it is the sublimation of that of which the apish mummery of the scene is the degeneration, art appealing only through the medium of the senses to the soul. Faust can see the Vision only as he stands reverently away from the mirror; when he steps forward and attempts to grasp the form, the Vision fades. The same truth is expressed in a frank saying often heard in the Paris

* Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy, The Fine Arts,* p. 24, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1888.

studios: "If you want to be an artist, you must hang up your passions with your hat and coat before you enter the studio." That is, if you want to be an artist, you must have such impersonal reverence for beauty for its own sake as to inhibit the desire for egoistic possession. Thus the purity of a statue, or of the figures of a painting, is not a question of drapery, but of the purity of the artist's mind. It is just here that the discussion of the nude in art has gone wrong. A partially draped figure may be far more sensually seductive than one entirely nude, as purveyors of vice well understand. There are two kinds of prudery—the one of vice, and the other of ignorance; and the latter is only less harmful than the former. It is the prudery of ignorance, rampant in mediocrity, that mutilates the classic statues of a museum, excludes Longfellow's *Building of the Ship* from the public schools of a great city, closes the doors of the theater to Bernard Shaw's *Widowers' Houses,* while opening them wide to salacious vaudeville, and sends a "breeches-painter" up to deface the figures in Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment.* A pure-minded artist cannot

make an unchaste statue, a sensually degraded artist cannot carve a pure one.

What is true of the artist is true, only in lesser measure, of the student. His mind must be clean; he, too, must have impersonal reverence for beauty, to respond aright to art, otherwise he may take a mere swinish pleasure in even noble productions. These dangers are, however, only the inevitable corollary of the peculiar greatness of sculpture and painting —the power to appeal directly to the physical vision, and through this to bring home conceptions to the imagination and the intellect with a concrete effectiveness unequaled in other types of art.

Like sculpture and painting, music makes its appeal to the soul only through the medium of the senses, and like them it may forget the soul and appeal only to the sense, in which case it degenerates. There is a type of merely sensuous music that is not much above the plane of the beer drinking and gormandizing to which it is often subordinated. Do not misunderstand me: sensuous pleasure, in right relation, is itself worth while; properly controlled beer drinking may be a sound relaxa-

tion; still, music on that plane is scarcely the highest art, and indulged in to excess may intoxicate like the beer.

Even music that is sound and true art involves a special danger, owing to the fact that it appeals so powerfully to the emotions. Emotion is the energy of life; the function of reason is regulative among desires, giving direction and control. Emotion is steam in the boiler of life that sends the engine over the road of progress; reason is the controlling engineer with his hand upon the throttle. No matter how well-trained the engineer and how perfect the machinery, if there is no steam in the boiler the engine goes nowhere. Thus no man ever accomplished anything who did not love something, hate something or desire something. On the other hand, uncontrolled emotion means a wild riot of loosened energies, as a runaway locomotive goes to smash.

Music constantly stimulates and refines the emotional sensibility, and this is good or bad according as it is, or is not, balanced by strong self-direction and self-control. Where there is this strong directive center of character, the greater the emotional sensitiveness, the wider

and deeper is the response to nature and life. Where that center is wanting, the refining of the sensibilities makes one an Æolian harp, vibrating to every wind of beauty and breath of desire, until in the end one becomes a bundle of jaded nerves, giving no longer music but discord in response to the appeal of life. Consider the fate of that strangely gifted poet who wrote:

> "To drift with every passion till my soul
> Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
> Is it for this that I have given away
> Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?" *

The sonnet beginning with these lines reads like the cry of a lost soul—lost, if the statement be personal, because emotion was developed without reason, and sensitiveness was refined without balancing self-control.

This form of degeneration comes only in the most highly developed civilization. Art is not to blame for it, but the wrong use of any one of the arts may lead to it; while, for the reasons given, the danger is more subtle in music than

* Oscar Wilde, Sonnet prefixed to the volume of lyric poems.

elsewhere. It finds occasional pathetic illustration in the lives of musicians of a certain type. Great execution in music is *creation;* but below that plane a high degree of good execution is possible through technical skill combined with sensitive receptivity. In such a case the musician may lend himself, as a fine instrument, to the genius of the composer, so that the music is recreated through the artist executing. The result is a continual refining of the sensuous and emotional life, and, where the personality is of the receptive type indicated, unless there is a balancing cultivation of strong self-direction, grave danger is present of a subtle but terrible form of moral deterioration. Instances of it are too numerous to require specific mention.

The same truth holds for the one who appreciates. He, too, needs to balance the sensuous and emotional appeal of music by deliberately cultivating self-control and by seeking opportunities for vigorous, self-expressive action. It is well, also, to choose with some care one's companions in hearing even great music; for the effect of it is to render one, for the time being, more sensitive to any emotional appeal,

whether for good or evil. Instances can be given of those who have gone down as a result, indirectly, of the sensuous and emotional intoxication produced by Wagner operas; but the blame is not upon Wagner or his music. These dangers, however, are but the inevitable corollary of the supreme power music possesses —the power to appeal through the sense of hearing to the emotional life, and to sweep one on to the sea of feeling as can no other art.

Like the other arts, poetry, too, has the dangers correlative to its functions. Since the sensuous appeal to the eye is less direct than in sculpture and painting, and to the ear less powerful than in music, there is not so much danger of appealing only to the senses in poetry. This happens, however, as in the merely sensuous beauty of certain poems of Oscar Wilde and Paul Verlaine. The vicious effect here is not so great as in the other arts; but just because poetry has more complex relation to the human spirit, and goes further in the interpretation of life, it involves deeper dangers. Literature may pander to decadent taste in lyric, drama or novel; it may dress vice in attractive garments so that it becomes

dangerously seductive; it may portray diseased phases of life out of sound relation to the whole. Thus upon the whole personality, including both the emotions and the intellect, the vicious effect may be produced.

Even when literature is itself sane, it may still be misused. It is possible to shed so many tears over the imaginary characters of the drama or novel that one's eyes are dry toward the same tragedy in the street behind us or the house next door. The need is always to return from the symbol of art to the life symbolized; then only does art become a doorway to the deeper appreciation of life. Here, as with the other arts, the danger is merely the other side of the supreme power of the art in expressing and interpreting life.

"It is important, at the present time, to bear in mind that the human soul has still greater need of the ideal than of the real.

It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live. Would you realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives."—Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, p. 295.

"Beauty results from the harmony between spirit and sense; it addresses all the faculties of man, and can only be appreciated if a man employs fully all his strength. He must bring to it an open sense, a broad heart, a spirit full of freshness. All a man's nature must be on the alert, and this is not the case with those divided by abstraction, narrowed by formulas, enervated by application."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 330.

"That which distinguishes genius, and should be the standard for judging it, is the height to which it is able to soar when it is in the proper mood and finds a fitting occasion—a height always out of the reach of ordinary talent."—Schopenhauer, *The Art of Literature*, p. 88.

"The capacity of the sublime is one of the noblest aptitudes of man. Beauty is useful, but does not go beyond man. The sublime applies to the pure spirit. The sublime must be joined to the beautiful to complete the *æsthetic education*, and to enlarge man's heart beyond the sensuous world."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 141.

CHAPTER XVII

BEAUTY AND THE LIFE OF APPRECIATION

IT is because art appeals to the whole human spirit—senses, imagination, emotions, intellect, that it is so difficult to translate into terms of the understanding, as has been evident in all our discussion. We *appreciate* much that we never *understand.* It is possible to respond deeply to the appeal of music, and yet be quite in ignorance of principles of melody and harmony. One may enjoy the beauty of a painting, with no knowledge of the technique by which it is produced. So one may appreciate a friend, without having an intellectual judgment of his conduct and character. Indeed, as our previous studies have shown, too much analysis with the intellect may even stand in the way of appreciation, as criticism and creation rarely go together.

Much of our happiness is in appreciation; imagine life denuded of it: how intolerably

barren our existence would be! Thus life is always in advance of the understanding: in a profoundly true sense we *are* better than we *know*. First we live, and then we think about it, haltingly translating our experience into a theory of the world. Thus the major development of Greek poetry came before any one had scanned a foot or named a measure; and Greek character had reached its fruition and begun to decline, before Aristotle analyzed it into its elements and constructed them into his theory of ethics. Faith is thus "the substance of things hoped for," that is, their realization in life, before we can put them into our philosophy. Many persons, caught in some eddy of thought, feel compelled to reject all belief in the things of the spirit, and yet go on serenely living to them all the time.

Thomas Hill Green, whose philosophy received popular exposition some time ago through Mrs. Ward's *Robert Elsmere,* pointed this paradox.* He spoke of the fact that many earnest men these days feel compelled to accept the philosophy of naturalism, as the

* Introduction to *Prolegomena to Ethics,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1890.

whole truth of things, and yet go on finding personal consolation in the poetry of Browning and Tennyson—poetry based on the very ideas, the philosophy of naturalism wholly rejects. Obviously we must give up the poetry, abandon the theory, or else come to a plane of thought where the seemingly opposed elements can be united.

This life of appreciation, let it be noted, is just as real as the life of the understanding. Wordsworth, who stands beside the lake, watching the wealth of golden daffodils nodding in the breeze, is just as truly related to that aspect of nature, as the scientist who picks the flowers to pieces, counts their petals and tells us their physical structure and history. So when we look up to an ideal, love it and seek to realize it, we actually produce changes in the material world, and are as truly related to reality as is possible in the life of the understanding. Similarly the relation to another life in love is even deeper than the intellectual judgment of character.

In a sense the loftiest truth is *appreciated* in *wisdom* rather than *understood* in *knowledge.* Knowledge and wisdom are upon different

planes; knowledge is of facts, wisdom of truth. Facts are the root from which the flower of truth may or may not blossom. Truth is the soul of fact, is fact interpreted; and for right interpretation, wise vision of life in relation is required. Thus one may know much and not be wise at all; and, on the other hand, one may be deeply wise and quite without ordinary learning. That is what Jesus meant when he said: "I thank thee, O Father, . . . that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." * To enter the kingdom of truth one must have the simple openness of the child. To *see* true one must *be* true; and moral sincerity or reality is the deepest basis of wisdom. That is why persons who *always ring true* are found almost as often among the unlearned as among the highly educated.

Art has thus a closer relation to reality than philosophy.

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be;" †

* *Luke*, Chapter X, verse 21.
† *In Memoriam*, Prelude.

because in our "little systems" we take the arc we have found of God's truth and twist it into a completed theory of the world. The theory helps for a time, as a basis of life, but inevitably passes. Art, on the other hand, may present the arc of truth with its curve scarcely changed, since the artist is often inconsistent for the sake of truth, presenting, in all the form and color of life, what experience has taught him.

This was Victor Hugo's meaning in holding that the scientists build, one on the labors of another, but the great artist breaks out through the finite into the infinite, and his work therefore has eternal value.* Hence an artistic masterpiece has power to grow with our growth, fresh truth being evident in it as we bring to unlock it the key of deeper experience. There is in every true work of art something of that inexhaustible residuum that is in life itself, giving dignity to the humblest personality. Life is the text all philosophy has sought to interpret, and there is more in the

* Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare,* translated by M. B. Anderson, Book III, Chapters III-V. A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago, 1899.

text than in all the commentaries. Indeed, the supreme value of the greatest thinkers, such as Plato and Spinoza, is that they have been artists as well as philosophers, giving concrete insight and the wisdom of life, as well as metaphysical theory. Love, wisdom, faith and beauty thus belong to the life of appreciation, and defy complete translation into terms of the understanding.

This explains why, despite the fact that almost every philosopher, from Plato downward, has attempted an explanation of beauty, beauty remains undefined. The most that we can do is to show its aspects and relations. For example, there is in nearly all appreciation of beauty an element of convention; we respond most readily to that to which we are habituated. Consider the different types of human face and figure that have been regarded as beautiful by various races in different times. I recall Stanley's remarking that, after being for a long time in Central Africa, and seeing constantly the bare, rich, brown and black bodies of the natives, the few white men with him appeared singularly washed out and unpleasing.

Erasmus was perhaps the most cultivated

man of his age. He loved the beauty of Greek manuscripts and Latin literature. In the vigor of his manhood he crossed the Alps on horseback, on the road to Italy to take his doctor's degree. His letters note just three things as impressing him in Switzerland: the dirty and inconvenient lodgings, the intolerable smell from the stoves, and the sour wine that gave him indigestion!* Not a word of the picturesque beauty of that circle beyond circle of snow-clad mountains rising till their summits seem to touch the sky. The point is, the romantic love of nature beauty had not yet come to consciousness in Europe, and Erasmus, with all his cultivation, was totally without it. Is a better illustration needed of the element of habit and convention entering into the appreciation of beauty? If so, remember that Shakespeare was regarded by the best critics of one long pseudo-classical period as an untutored barbarian, with great natural genius but no art!

Every lover of beauty would resent, however, our making too much of its conventional

* Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, p. 310. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1895.

aspect. He is sure there is something deeper and more permanent in the nature of beauty; and he is right. Such a principle is the harmony of the parts in a whole, in the appeal whether of nature or art. Emerson speaks of this in *Each and All:*

"I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky;—
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye."

So with the appeal to one sense: the beauty of the landscape is not in the lake, river, forest, hills or sky; but in all these fused together in a harmonious whole. Similarly, the beauty of a Corot painting is not in the misty group of trees, the dancing figures, the mellow dawn light or the subtle atmosphere, but in the composition of these into a harmony.

Still deeper in beauty is the harmony of an organism to its function, or of a thing made to its purpose. A beautiful body is one where every structure and organ is well adapted to

its purpose. Thus deformity is always æsthetically painful because it interposes a barrier between organ and function. The running of a child in the sunshine is beautiful because the action is so natural and inevitable.

The same principle holds even with things made by the hand of man. When one sees a great machine smoothly doing its work, with no friction anywhere, one's feeling is closely akin to that one experiences in the presence of the sublime. Indeed, when our mechanical age is far enough in the past to be seen in perspective, I have no doubt that our wonderful machinery will be recognized as romantic and almost sublime. Stand beside the railroad track at night, under the stars, and watch a brilliantly lighted passenger train sweep by; and you feel up and down your back a shiver closely akin to that you experience in the presence of some masterpiece of art. Henry Turner Bailey says that he hopes, before the steam locomotive completely passes, some artist will paint it, so that its romance may be recorded.

I never cross on a ferry from New Jersey to New York, in the morning or evening, and

see those high buildings, outlined like watch-towers against the misty blush of the sky, without keenly responding to the scene. The "sky-scraper," born of the modern business imagination, is wonderfully adapted to its purpose—that of lifting a vast population into the air and multiplying many times the activities possible on the little end of Manhattan island; and I have never been able to understand how artists who come back full of praises for the ragged sky line of towers and crags upon the Rhine, can show only contempt for the equally ragged and, seen in perspective, at least equally romantic sky line of Manhattan island.

Still deeper as a principle of beauty is that harmony of soul and body, content and form, we have previously studied. This is present in both nature and art. To give beauty there must be definitely limited form; the abstract conception must attain concrete realization; and the more perfect the marrying of the body of expression to the soul of meaning, the greater is the beauty.

We may go one step farther. All art, as

we have seen, draws its forms ultimately from nature. Thus the final principle of all appreciation of beauty lies in the relation we sustain to the nature world. Now there is a natural rhythm between human sensibility and the forms and colors of nature, which results from the general process of evolution. Our senses have been developed on the basis of the world as it is, and there is thus the same adaptation to environment in our response to beauty, that is present in our relation to the fundamental conditions of life. We can trace the development of the eye from the simple pigment spot sensitive to light, in the body of some early animal, to the wonderful window of the soul through which we look out on the forms and colors of the world. Because our senses have been gradually developed in harmony with *this* world, it follows that *all appreciation of beauty in nature is a coming to consciousness of a rhythm already existing between our senses and the nature world.*

Let me try to make this clear by a whimsical and necessarily inadequate illustration. Suppose at noon to-day the world should suddenly turn red—the color of the grass, the

foliage, the sea and the sky all brilliant red: What would happen? We would all rush out doors and be strongly impressed and stimulated by this wonderful spectacle of a red world. Before night came, however, those of us who are consciously responsive to the beauty of nature as it is, would be tired out. Then we should have to get up day after day and face the intolerable red world. The result would be an increasing depression in spirit and action. We would have less ambition, less interest in our work, less desire to marry and have children. On the other hand, those persons who have never recognized consciously the blue of the sky, the green grass and gray seas, would get on very well with a red world. Do you not see that in the end Nature would select a race of men really enjoying a red world? The illustration is faulty, I know; but it is the best I can give, in reference to something so ultimate in human nature, to show what actually has occurred. Our senses have been developed in relation to *this* world, though not to all of it. We see certain colors of the spectrum, but when the vibration of light waves in the transmitting medium be-

comes too rapid or too slow, we see nothing; yet may there not be whole ranges of color beyond ours, seen, for example, by those strange, many-faceted eyes of certain insects? So we can hear only certain limited ranges of the vibration we call sound; but when one looks through the microscope at the mysterious, apparently auricular, organ of certain insects, one wonders again whether, in what we call a still June noon-time, there may not be a wealth of melody and harmony heard by the insect, which simply does not exist for us. Thus our senses do not give us *all* the world; but they have been developed in relation to it, and our appreciation of the beauty of nature is merely a consciousness of that already existent rhythm. Since art must take its forms from nature and appeal only through the senses, the principle holds for appreciation of beauty in art as well. Thus it is possible to show the elements of beauty and the conditions of our appreciation of it, but beauty itself remains undefined.

"What the artist does or has done excites in us the mood in which he himself was when he did it. A free mood in the artist makes us free; a constrained one makes us uncomfortable. We usually find this freedom of the artist where he is fully equal to his subject. It is on this account we are so pleased with Dutch pictures; the artists painted the life around them, of which they were perfect masters. If we are to feel this freedom of mind in an actor, he must, by study, imagination, and natural disposition, be perfect master of his part, must have all bodily requisites at his command, and must be upheld by a certain youthful energy. But study is not enough without imagination, and study and imagination together are not enough without natural disposition. Women do the most through imagination and temperament."—Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann and Soret*, pp. 417, 418.

"We know that the sensibility of the mind depends, as to degree, on the liveliness, and for extent on the richness, of the imagination. Now the predominance of the faculty of analysis must necessarily deprive the imagination of its warmth and energy, and a restricted sphere of objects must diminish its wealth. It is for this reason that the abstract thinker has very often a *cold* heart, because he analyzes impressions, which only move the mind by their combination or totality; on the other hand, the man of business, the statesman, has very often a *narrow* heart, because shut up in the narrow circle of his employment his imagination can neither expand nor adapt itself to another manner of viewing things."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, pp. 41, 42.

"Just as the sun cannot shed its light but to the eye that sees it, nor music sound but to the hearing ear, so the value of all masterly work in art and science is conditioned by the kinship and capacity of the mind to which it speaks. It is only such a mind as this that possesses the magic word to stir and call forth the spirits that lie hidden in great work. To the ordinary mind a masterpiece is a sealed cabinet of mystery,—an unfamiliar musical instrument from which the player, however much he may flatter himself, can draw none but confused tones. How different a painting looks when seen in a good light, instead of in some dark corner! Just in the same way, the impression made by a masterpiece varies with the capacity of the mind to understand it."—Schopenhauer, *The Art of Literature*, p. 94.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STUDY OF BEAUTY IN NATURE AND ART

THE life of appreciation is a unity; to touch one aspect of it is to influence the whole. An awakening in personal love deepens one's response to the beauty of nature, as is indicated even in the conventional allusions of poetry to the lover wandering pensively in wood and field. The same experience influences the religious life: it is no accident that the majority of "conversions" occur in the period of sex awakening, nor does this fact in any way discredit the religious experience. So all cultivation of response to beauty, when in right relation, deepens the capacities in love, in aspiration toward the moral and religious ideal and in recognition of truth. Herein lies the importance of educating response to beauty. We can by conscious effort cultivate this aspect of the life of appreciation and so deepen the whole.

There are the two worlds of beauty—Na-

ture and Art; yet we might reverse the titles: nature is God's art; and art is man's highest nature. Each of these has its own superiority. In nature the identity of content and form is so wonderful that beside it human art seems painfully stumbling and inadequate. This union of the soul of meaning with the body of expression in a flower, for example, is perfect to the point that it may sound strange to speak of the two elements as present. So the flaming dawns and golden sunsets, the somber forest and melody of the pines—all seem to be the serene flowing forth of the divine mind into harmonious expression. Even

> "Vague outlines of the Everlasting Thought
> Lie in the melting shadows as they pass." *

The artist can but stand in awe-struck admiration before this fusing of idea and expression in the matchless art of the Eternal Hand.

Even more significant is the fact that nature is *alive* with ever-changing beauty. The greatest of landscape paintings can fix but one mood of nature in statical form, while in the world

* Richard Realf, *Symbolisms,* in *Poems,* p. 4. Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York, 1898.

without, from the flush of the dawn, through the growing splendor of the morning, on to the beauty of the late afternoon, the apocalypse of the sunset and the night with its calm, shining stars, the single day pours out an inexhaustible wealth of beauty, changing each instant of time. The greatest portrait painter—a Titian, a Rembrandt, a Raphael—can paint but one of the actual or possible expressions of the face, fixing it permanently. The countenance of the humblest of us is alive, constantly changing, played upon by the ever-varying light and shadow, freshly revealing character in each of the manifold expressions of a single hour. Even literature, with all its power to portray life in action and relation, seems a poor echo in contrast to the vast, multiform maelstrom of life.

The harmony or identity of form and content in nature gives a wonderful healing power for the spirit of man. No human art, not even Greek sculpture, has this power in equal measure. Goethe shows this ministry of Nature in the scene which begins the second part of his supreme work, where Faust, before entering upon his career in the larger world,

is healed in the calm, sweet Lethe he finds on the breast of the Nature mother. This ministry is experienced in all our response to the beauty and sublimity of nature, and it is impossible to exaggerate its value for the modern spirit.

At least equally significant is the exalting power of the living beauty of nature over the spirit, lifting us away from the submerging stream of events that surges by us each day, giving calm perspective and inspiring to sane action. Wordsworth said of one of his characters:

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills." *

Emerson exclaimed in a fragment of verse that might be taken as the motto of his life:

"Teach me your mood, O patient stars!
Who climb each night the ancient sky,
Leaving on space no shade, no scars,
No trace of age, no fear to die." †

* *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle, Works,* Globe edition, p. 365.

† *Poems,* Riverside edition, from the appendix, p. 277.

To such an exalted mood the beauty of nature may lift us, giving memories that lessen the weight of many a burden and lighten the struggle up many a stony path. With this, how it widens our relation to the great universe that stretches away, giving steady growth in power to see and appreciate.

Since the contribution to our lives may be so great, it is most important to receive it fully. The need is to put ourselves in the way of enjoying the beauty of nature. Just because it is given so lavishly and universally, we are apt to ignore it and fail of its gift; yet the inexhaustible fecundity of nature is but the measure of our opportunity. Let us enter into our heritage of beauty, given everywhere in seas and forests, gray moorlands and purple mountains, daisy-dotted meadows and brooks flowing through leafy nooks, rosy dawns and starlit nights—just to enjoy it is the main requisite.

Opportunities for appreciation are not enough, however. It is possible to live close to Nature, and yet be blind to her beauty. Indeed, constant utilitarian association may dull the æsthetic response. It is not always

the Swiss peasants who appreciate most consciously the beauty of the Alps. They love them, and usually come back to them, from keeping shops in Italy or restaurants in London; yet the cultivated traveler, who comes and goes, may respond far more keenly to the beauty of the mountains. Nature is so vast and overwhelming that we are bewildered by the very wealth of beauty poured out. We need to study consciously this beauty, to isolate from the multitude of forms, mastering one fragment after another, for the sake of deepening subsequent spontaneous appreciation.

Let one get acquainted with a tree one passes every morning; see it in the flush of the springtime, wakening to the garment of soft green; in the full tide of the luxuriant summer with the dark green foliage and cool shadows; in the autumn when, as you pass some morning, the flash of gold and crimson is across its boughs, as if some transfiguring hand had touched it with the caress of death; then watch it day by day as the color spreads, fades to dimmer hues, until the brown leaves fall in whirling gusts under the gray sky, and the

bare arms are outlined like lace-work against the somber heaven; on to the white sleeping time of the winter: and you find such loving appreciation of one aspect of nature is a doorway to the whole world of beauty.

If you have walked in the fields with an artist, you were doubtless surprised, the first time, at colors to which he called your attention. You did not see them, and came home feeling that these artist folk were strange persons, but to be tolerated for what they achieve. Go again and again, and you discover that the colors were there all the time; it was merely that your eye had to be trained to see them. Perhaps your artist friend carried a little glass into which he occasionally squinted, arousing your curiosity. You inquired what it was, and he replied, "a reducing glass," the opposite of a magnifying glass. It merely pushed the landscape away and framed it, yet how magical the effect! Such an aid is not needed by the sea or from the mountain top, where Nature sets the picture away and frames it with the sky; but when one is looking down the village lane, at the straggling buildings across the road, or through

the avenue of trees, the reducing glass shows one a wealth of colors and beautiful forms which were there all the time, but not seen consciously until one's relation to the picture was slightly changed.

Some time when you are in the country, upon a slight elevation, try the experiment of bending over and looking at the world upside down. You will be amazed at the colors you see and the fresh beauty of the forms. The landscape is unchanged; it is merely that the position of your eyes in relation to it is reversed; and thus the blurring of the impression by habit, is replaced by the shock of a new relation and the consequent stimulation of the attention.

The first time one goes to London one is impressed with the terrible weight of life, the sordid materialism, the ugly, utilitarian, smoke-stained buildings. Let one climb to the top of a great omnibus and go bowling down Oxford street, and the whole impression is transformed. One sees the long vista of the street softened with misty light, the structures on either hand picturesque and transfigured with the dreamy atmosphere, the whole scene lifted

to the world of ideals and dreams. Why? Merely because one has been lifted a dozen feet from the sidewalk, and a fresh point of view obtained. These devices merely indicate how one may freshen one's reaction, deepen one's appreciation, and so by conscious study enter the kingdom of beauty.

Conscious reception is not enough; there is need, too, of expression. A hazy notion becomes a clear conception only through expression. When a student says that he knows but cannot tell, the statement is partly false. The fact is, he does not clearly know until he *has told* in some form. Intellectually and artistically nothing is truly our own until we have given it away—expressed it in some form; and that is why spiritual things grow by sharing them.

Thus one needs to give some expression of one's response to the beauty of nature. That is the value of comradeship and conversation with a friend. That also is the value of drawing and painting as taught in the public schools. There are those who imagine that we hope to make artists of all the children: we neither hope nor fear that one child in a

hundred will become an artist, but we do hope that all the other ninety-nine, as well, will learn to see something more of the forms and colors of things by trying to express them.

You may say, "We are not artists, and our education lacked this opportunity." There is one art, nevertheless, open to all. It is the universal art of our own language. If one will write out the impression made on one by the unusual sunset, the sweep of mountains, the peace of the forest, such a book of thoughts and impressions will be a great means of growth in appreciation, as well as an interesting record of one's experience.

This conscious study is wholly for the sake of appreciation. Were we to stop with the conscious analysis, it would be worse than useless; but as a means to subsequent synthetic appreciation it becomes a great help in enabling us to enter into our heritage.

If Art must lack the identity of content and form present in Nature, and if, in contrast to the living revelation of beauty in Nature, it seems fixed and inert, Art has, as we have shown, a correlative greatness of its own. The

soul in Nature is dumb and brooding. It is indeed *"Vague* outlines of the everlasting thought" that "lie in the melting shadows as they pass"; and these vague outlines are translated to clear expression only through human art. Contrast the inchoate, if spheric, music of the pine forest, with the ordered melody and harmony of a Beethoven symphony; the brooding beauty of the French nature world, with its clear interpretation in Corot, Millet and Bastien-Lepage; the bewildering maelstrom of human life, with *Hamlet, Macbeth, Faust* and the *Divine Comedy.* Remember that only through concrete expression is the abstract idea mastered, and that Art, by putting life and nature through the transmuting medium of the artist's spirit and appreciation, reveals their meaning. Thus, in its own ways, Art goes beyond and above Nature, with an excellence of its own.

Thus there is in relation to Art, as to Nature, at least equal need that we give ourselves daily to the enjoyment of beauty. That usually we have so little is due, not mainly to lack of opportunity, but to failure to use the opportunities that lie close at hand. I

recall an experience in going to visit for the first time the museum of art in one of our greater American cities. It was necessary to pass down a main thoroughfare, where high board-fences had been erected before some building operations. The boards were covered with flaming posters, advertising some particularly sensational vaudeville, and the crowd gazing upon them was so great that one had to walk in the gutter. I came to the gallery: there was no crowd there; the hollow echo of one's footfall alone broke the stillness. Yet here was a Corot as characteristic as anything in the Louvre. On one side, the painting contained a dark mass of trees, in the foreground the characteristic group of dancing figures, over all the subtle depth of atmosphere, with a wealth of yellow dawn lighting coming in from behind. In the next room was Millet's *Shepherd Returning with his Flock:* the sheep huddled together, their backs touched with the red light of the setting sun that hung lurid, just above the horizon; before them the shepherd—a tattered cloak about him, heavy wooden shoes upon his feet, the crook in his hand, and in his face that pathetic hunger, of

which Millet's social idealism made him the great interpreter; while all about the desolate moorland stretched away.

Near by was Munkacsy's *Bringing in the Night Rovers:* an early morning street scene, with groups of common people—an old woman selling carrots, a girl returning from market with a basket on her arm, a little child going to school; in the center the prisoners and guard—in the foreground of these a rude giant, the massive figure in tattered cloak, a look of dumb hatred and rebellious gloom in the face. I need not multiply descriptions; a dozen other great paintings were there, not to mention the admirable reproductions of masterpieces of sculpture; yet the museum was almost vacant. The same experience can be repeated in almost any city. I have noted that even in Boston, many of the persons visiting the museum and the paintings in the public library have to ask their way about the city when they leave.

Everywhere the same fault is evident—failure to enjoy opportunities that are just at hand. So with music: each of us has friends with some proficiency in that art; and it is

true we do ask them to play or sing when we give an evening's entertainment; yet there is not one of them who would not rather play or sing for you alone, because you love music, than be used as polite fringe on your dinner party, where the guests present are not even courteous enough to stop talking and listen to the music.

Of all the fine arts, literature is the most accessible. Whatever limitations one may suffer under, in opportunities for the enjoyment of sculpture, painting and music, the noblest achievements in literature are everywhere available. The great books of all time lie on the table in your own room for use in that margin of life that most persons so sadly waste. Indeed, as with the beauty of nature, the very accessibility of literature blinds us to its value. Thus here, even more than with the other arts, failure to enjoy beauty is one's own fault.

Still, with art as with nature, opportunities for spontaneous appreciation are not sufficient. Here, too, without training and cultivation, we often make sad work of it. How many persons are only confused and bored by great

music, and go to hear it merely because they think it is socially the thing to do. So with painting and sculpture: consider the average American abroad, who spends an occasional free hour "doing" a gallery—a phrase as offensive in expression as it is pathetic in meaning. One sees the groups of tourists surging through the gallery, from room to room, and one wonders whether the result can be other than a confused blur of impressions, while one blushes for one's countrymen. Even with literature, careless reading and whimsical response are more frequent than sound appreciation.

No, opportunities to enjoy beauty are not enough; with art, as with nature, there must be added the conscious study of beauty for the sake of subsequent appreciation. Thus when one enters a new gallery of paintings, instead of wandering through, and blurring one impression with a hundred others, let one select two or three great works and try to master them. Ask questions of the painting. Why did Corot bring the dawn lighting in from behind? What do the dancing figures add to the impression of the whole? What is

the value of the atmosphere? Why are the trees grouped at one side? What was the artist attempting to do in this painting? What is its relation to the actual nature world?

So with the Millet painting described above: What is value of the stretch of moorland? What did Millet mean by the look of weariness and dumb hunger in the shepherd's face? What is his aim in the painting? What is the relative value of nature and the human elements in it? What gives it beauty?

A little of such earnest, first-hand study, and the pictures begin to fall into place: one soon becomes aware of the definitive characteristics of different schools and separate artists; and one enters into one's heritage, as is impossible through the most extended reading of criticism and history of art.

With music, such study is more difficult, just because music is evanescent, and thus those who do not possess the peculiar musical memory find a composition difficult to recall. The more reason for hearing a great composition over and over again. Your musical friend, whom you ask to play for you, tells you he has nothing new. Tell him you are glad, that

you did not want novelty, but music; and listen again and again to a composition until you have made it your own. Study what it does to your senses and emotions, analyze its themes and motives, its harmonies, study the artist's method and purpose. Through a little of such analysis one's subsequent enjoyment of music may be immeasurably deepened.

Again the accessibility of literature makes such study peculiarly possible and valuable in that art. To choose a single significant example: let one take the little volume compiled by Palgrave—the *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics;* let one go through it poem by poem, analyzing the structure, diction and imagery, studying at every point the relation of forms of expression to the content of thought, feeling and imagination, noting the molding influence of artist and epoch; and one will find that the whole wealth of world literature has been opened to one and given new beauty and meaning.

Finally, not less than with nature, does the student need to give expression to his experience with art. By recording carefully the impression each great work of art makes upon

him, the student learns to master his own experience and fix and clarify the receptive life. Such study of beauty, carried on for a little time each day, will give one the heritage of both nature and art beyond one's highest expectation.

"Continue to translate yourself to the heaven of art; there is no more undisturbed, unmixed, purer happiness than may thus be attained."—Beethoven, in Kerst, *Beethoven: The Man and the Artist*, p. 12.

"Let us remember the prompter, very delicately and genially drawn by Goethe in a few touches, who is so much moved at certain places that he weeps hot tears; yet 'it is, strictly speaking, *not the so-called moving places* that affect him so, but the *beautiful* places *from which the pure genius of the poet, so to speak, looks out from bright, open eyes.*' In the case of persons of a predominantly tender, ardent disposition we not seldom meet this phenomenon. A beautiful poem, a sublime scene in nature—nay, the narration of a good deed, moves them to tears. And history tells us of the noble Saladin, who was a warlike hero, that the narration of great deeds and simple touching occurrences often moved him also to tears. It can hardly be assumed that a warlike hero is the possessor of weak nerves. What have these grayish-white threads to do at all with the eternal ideas of the Good and the Beautiful? The emotion of which we have just spoken is something better than mere nervous irritation; it is a higher kind of homesickness, which attacks us when the ideas of the Good and the Beautiful suddenly appear before us and remind us of our eternal home."—Ambros, *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry*, pp. 42, 43.

"The amphora which refuses to go to the fountain deserves the hisses of the water-pots."—Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, p. 319.

"I admit that the exercises of the gymnasium form athletic bodies; but beauty is only developed by the free and equal play of the limbs. In the same way the tension of the isolated spiritual forces may make extraordinary men; but it is only the well-tempered equilibrium of these forces that can produce happy and accomplished men."—Schiller, *Essays Æsthetical and Philosophical*, p. 43.

CHAPTER XIX

ART FOR LIFE'S SAKE

SINCE art has its own aspects of superiority, as compared with nature, it fulfills its own service for the spirit. Something of the same healing power, exercised by the beauty of nature is in its influence, while it is at least equally exalting, lifting the spirit and stimulating to great action. Art is further a wonderful source of power to see and appreciate the world as it is, and life as it ought to be. When Raphael achieves a *Sistine Madonna,* it is not merely one more beautiful picture to hang in Dresden gallery, but that an ideal over which ten centuries brooded and prayed is made real for all time, or until the canvas rots and the figures fade from it. So when Shakespeare carves in Pentelic marble the beauty of his Desdemona or shapes the bronze majesty of Cleopatra, or when Dante wakens from the dark fugue of the *Inferno* the tender melody of his Francesca da Rimini, the result is not merely three more literary

paintings for the galleries of the past, but three windows opened into the woman's soul and hence into the life of the human spirit; and to look reverently through these windows is to come back to the every-day world of men and women with deepened power to appreciate the wonder, pathos, comedy, romance, tragedy of common life.

So with our appreciation of nature. Every great landscape painting not only makes its own contribution, but enables us to look out on the world with unsealed eyes. How wonderfully a gallery of sculpture trains us to see the beauty of the forms life molds; how sensitive the music lover becomes to the inarticulate melody of nature; while poetry is forever revealing to us the beauty of common things. The daisy bloomed unnoticed in the grass for uncounted centuries; it was when Robert Burns called it "Wee, modest, crimson-tippéd flower" that we saw how beautiful it was, and we have been talking about it ever since.

Of all the hours of the day or night, perhaps the most moving is that just after the sunset, when the sky lights with red and gold sinking into the gray of the evening, the work of the

day is behind and the rest of the night not yet come; when, if we are wise, we pause in our tasks to meditate and dream. That hour has found interpretation everywhere in noble art —in painting, in music, above all in poetry. From pagan Sappho to Byron who, standing on Ravenna's shore beside the pine forest with its flood of memories, paraphrasing Dante and Sappho and uniting the mood of religion with the beauty of the world about him, sings:

"Ave Maria! blesséd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth—so beautiful and soft—
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—

What though 'tis but a pictured image strike?
That painting is no idol,—'tis too like.

. . . . .

Oh, Hesperus! thou bringest all good things—
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parents' brooding wings,
The welcome stall to the o'erlabored steer;
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

Soft Hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns!" *

Who can respond to this, perhaps the most beautiful passage in all Byron, and not find, ever after, deeper beauty in the evening hour and deeper meaning in the meditations it brings?

* Byron, *Don Juan,* canto III, stanzas CII—CVIII.

Equally does art reveal to us the world of ideals. In form and spirit, conduct and character, it portrays concretely types lifted above the world, toward which we must ever aspire. Further, it raises us to the circle and company of the elect. We learn to live in daily communion with the great masters, until Dante and Beethoven, Goethe and Michael Angelo seem closer to us than persons we meet in the street.

Thus supremely for the appreciative student *art is for life's sake.* Its end is not adornment or didactic teaching, it is not to impress us with technical skill and the mastery of difficulties, it is not to give sensuous pleasure or æsthetic satisfaction; it is for life's sake—that we may possess our heritage, grow in love and wisdom, ever toward the fuller achievement of life.

If this is the end for the appreciative student, how much more so is it for the creative artist. All the phases of the ministry of art he experiences in even higher measure. The healing and exalting influences of beauty are his to the full. If appreciation of beauty clarifies the mind and gives mastery of concep-

tions, how much more does its creation. If the student is inspired to action, the artist grows in the immediate field of his expression. Each achievement is but the vantage-ground to a new effort, and there is no limit to the possible growth in power to achieve and to appreciate the work of others. When Michael Angelo, taking the seventeen feet of marble injured and rejected by other sculptors, glad as a youth to work with so splendid a piece, labored so faithfully that his heroic statue of *David* issued, faultlessly posed, from the stone, it was not merely one more beautiful statue for the square or hall of Florence; it was that Michael Angelo, through the one achievement, had grown, not only in mastery of his art, but in his power to enter into the work of the Greeks and Romans, and of his Italian contemporaries and predecessors. Further, how the artist's eyes are unsealed to the beauty of the world, his ears set in tune with the music of things. What must he not see of the spectacle of life and of its ideals, after years of effort to express and interpret its phases.

For every great artist, therefore, art has been a way of life, a means of realizing his

own potential humanity. Dante, with life tragically cut off in love and vocation, exiled from the city he loved so well and criticised so harshly, learning all the bitterness of "climbing other people's stairs" and eating the "too salt" bread of patronage, wandering homeless from city to city, settling in the late years at Ravenna—even then stagnant in its marshes beside the Adriatic Sea—wandering with bent head and slow step under her pine forest, listening to the whisper of God in the music of the moving boughs, and brooding over all that life had failed to give him—Dante turns to art and makes of it another way of life, finding, in his own creation of the *Divine Comedy,* the truth, beauty, love, moral harmony and peace the world had failed to give him.

Michael Angelo, too vast in genius for the age in which he lived, bruised by a succession of artistic tragedies, loving late and knowing the pain of separation through death, lofty and alone, writhing his soul out in Dantesque sonnets—Michael Angelo, through all his struggles and sufferings, found in art—to use his own image—the means of shaping from the marble of experience the statue of character.

Beethoven, shadowed, as we have seen, by a somber childhood, saddened by bitter struggles and long-delayed recognition, thwarted in opportunity, cursed at the moment of achievement with the loss of the very sense through which his art could be enjoyed—Beethoven found in the creation of music, even when he could no longer hear it with the outer ear, a way of life through which his own ideal self might be realized.

Goethe said that all his works were but "fragments of a great confession,"* and recognized that, more than all his poetry, his life was his greatest work of art. Browning, perhaps more fully than any one else, developed in *The Ring and the Book* the view that the artist, taking the elements of God's world, remolds them into his own world, thus growing up toward that image of God in which he is potentially rather than actually made; and Browning lived his philosophy. Thus while the lesser men have often dedicated themselves to art, subordinating life to its expressions, the great masters have always found in art a way

* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Bohn Library translation, vol. I, p. 240.

of life, a means of growing up toward their own ideal of manhood, becoming the men God meant them to be. For them, supremely, art has always been *for life's sake.*

Must this crowning value of art be reserved for those alone whom the world calls artists? Fortunately not; for there is one supreme fine art to which all are called—*the art of living.* There is no aspect of life that cannot be made in some measure fine art. Take the simplest forms of hand labor: it has been the cry of all leaders in the Arts and Crafts movement, from Emerson and Ruskin, through William Morris, to the teachers of our own day, that beauty should not be added to utility afterward, but identified with it in the making, that there should be no artificial combination of use and beauty, but the useful should be created as art. If that is possible in artisan work, how much more is it in the deepest aspects of life. As there is no honest vocation that cannot be made a fine art, so every aspect of personal relationship is a problem of ever fresh artistic adjustment of one personality to others. If art is, as we have seen, *the adequate and harmonious expression and interpretation of some*

phase of man's life in true relation to the whole, what aspect of life is there that may not be made a fine art?

Thus the service of art to the human spirit is not limited to the few, but is universal for all. Every one may be and ought to be, not only a loving and appreciative student of the fine arts, but a creative artist in the form and color, the melody and harmony of life; and for student and artist alike, art is not for adornment's sake, or preaching's sake, or pleasure's sake, not for the sake of gratifying the senses or exhibiting technical skill, not for art's sake, but *for life's sake.*

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